

# RACIALLY AND ETHNICALLY MOTIVATED VIOLENT EXTREMISM: THE TRANSNATIONAL THREAT

---

HEARING  
BEFORE THE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
INTELLIGENCE AND  
COUNTERTERRORISM  
OF THE  
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS  
FIRST SESSION  
APRIL 29, 2021  
**Serial No. 117-10**

Printed for the use of the Committee on Homeland Security



Available via the World Wide Web: <http://www.govinfo.gov>

U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE  
WASHINGTON : 2021

44-824 PDF

## COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

BENNIE G. THOMPSON, Mississippi, *Chairman*

SHEILA JACKSON LEE, Texas	JOHN KATKO, New York
JAMES R. LANGEVIN, Rhode Island	MICHAEL T. McCAUL, Texas
DONALD M. PAYNE, JR., New Jersey	CLAY HIGGINS, Louisiana
J. LUIS CORREA, California	MICHAEL GUEST, Mississippi
ELISSA SLOTKIN, Michigan	DAN BISHOP, North Carolina
EMANUEL CLEAVER, Missouri	JEFFERSON VAN DREW, New Jersey
AL GREEN, Texas	RALPH NORMAN, South Carolina
YVETTE D. CLARKE, New York	MARIANNETTE MILLER-MEEKS, Iowa
ERIC SWALWELL, California	DIANA HARSHBARGER, Tennessee
DINA TITUS, Nevada	ANDREW S. CLYDE, Georgia
BONNIE WATSON COLEMAN, New Jersey	CARLOS A. GIMENEZ, Florida
KATHLEEN M. RICE, New York	JAKE LATURNER, Kansas
VAL BUTLER DEMINGS, Florida	PETER MEIJER, Michigan
NANETTE DIAZ BARRAGÁN, California	KAT CAMMACK, Florida
JOSH GOTTHEIMER, New Jersey	AUGUST PFLUGER, Texas
ELAINE G. LURIA, Virginia	ANDREW R. GARBARINO, New York
TOM MALINOWSKI, New Jersey	
RITCHIE TORRES, New York	

HOPE GOINS, *Staff Director*

DANIEL KROESE, *Minority Staff Director*

NATALIE NIXON, *Committee Clerk*

---

## SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE AND COUNTERTERRORISM

ELISSA SLOTKIN, Michigan, *Chairwoman*

SHEILA JACKSON LEE, Texas	AUGUST PFLUGER, Texas, <i>Ranking Member</i>
JAMES R. LANGEVIN, Rhode Island	MICHAEL GUEST, Mississippi
ERIC SWALWELL, California	JEFFERSON VAN DREW, New Jersey
JOSH GOTTHEIMER, New Jersey	JAKE LATURNER, Kansas
TOM MALINOWSKI, New Jersey	PETER MEIJER, Michigan
BENNIE G. THOMPSON, Mississippi ( <i>ex officio</i> )	JOHN KATKO, New York ( <i>ex officio</i> )

BRITTANY CARR, *Subcommittee Staff Director*

ADRIENNE SPERO, *Minority Subcommittee Staff Director*

JOY ZIEH, *Subcommittee Clerk*

# CONTENTS

	Page
STATEMENTS	
The Honorable Elissa Slotkin, a Representative in Congress From the State of Michigan, and Chairwoman, Subcommittee on Intelligence and Counterterrorism:	
Oral Statement .....	1
Prepared Statement .....	4
The Honorable August Pfluger, a Representative in Congress From the State of Texas, and Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Intelligence and Counterterrorism:	
Oral Statement .....	6
Prepared Statement .....	8
The Honorable Bennie G. Thompson, a Representative in Congress From the State of Mississippi, and Chairman, Committee on Homeland Security:	
Prepared Statement .....	8
The Honorable Sheila Jackson Lee, a Representative in Congress From the State of Texas:	
Prepared Statement .....	9
WITNESSES	
Mr. John T. Godfrey, Acting Coordinator for Counterterrorism and Acting Special Envoy for the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, United States Department of State:	
Oral Statement .....	13
Prepared Statement .....	14
Mr. John Cohen, Counterterrorism Coordinator and Assistant Secretary for Counterterrorism and Threat Prevention, United States Department of Homeland Security:	
Oral Statement .....	19
Prepared Statement .....	20
FOR THE RECORD	
The Honorable Elissa Slotkin, a Representative in Congress From the State of Michigan, and Chairwoman, Subcommittee on Intelligence and Counterterrorism:	
Letter From Chairwoman Slotkin to Secretary Antony J. Blinken .....	45
Letter From Naz Durakoglu to Chairwoman Slotkin .....	46



## **RACIALLY AND ETHNICALLY MOTIVATED VIO- LENT EXTREMISM: THE TRANSNATIONAL THREAT**

---

**Thursday, April 29, 2021**

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE  
AND COUNTERTERRORISM,  
*Washington, DC.*

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:31 a.m., via Webex, Hon. Elissa Slotkin [Chairwoman of the subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Slotkin, Jackson Lee, Langevin, Gottheimer, Malinowski, Pfluger, Guest, Van Drew, and Meijer.

Ms. SLOTKIN. The Subcommittee on Intelligence and Counterterrorism will come to order. Without objection, the Chair is authorized to declare the subcommittee in recess at any point.

Good morning, everyone. I want to thank our witnesses from the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of State for being here today to discuss a complex and pressing topic that deals directly with our safety here at home.

As the President said just last night, we won't ignore what our intelligence agencies have determined to be the most lethal terrorist threat to our homeland today, White supremacy. With that in mind, our subcommittee is meeting today to explore the threats posed by transnational, racially and ethnically motivated violent extremists, or RMVEs. That is an acronym, because the Government just loves our acronyms.

Our focus today is on the connections between individuals and groups here in the United States who use violence to further their racially or ethnically driven political goals, and the growing number of foreign groups who share their aims, ideologies, and violent designs.

While the information our intelligence community has on some of these foreign groups is admittedly less than we would like, the intelligence community has assessed that domestic racially and ethnically motivated violent extremist groups, which advocate for the superiority of the White race, have, "the most persistent and concerning transnational connections" of all U.S. domestic violent extremists.

Through these connections, they spread propaganda, train, and attempt to collaborate in carrying out violent acts. Given their relative ease of travel and communication, labeling these groups, their

leaders, and their supporters as what they are is one of—is all the more important to curb the threat at home and abroad.

That said, it remains true that foreign groups with transnational ties span a broad range of ideologies, including everyone from White supremacists to radical Islamic terrorists. This isn't a new or unfamiliar threat. It is one we have been confronted with in various forms for decades. But over the past few years, the United States and countries around the world have seen a surge in violence and terrorism, perpetrated by these kinds of organizations. This isn't just an American threat, it is a global one.

Many of these foreign groups are downright eager to use deadly violence to advance their goals. They are often heavily-armed, such as the Nordic Resistance Movement. They are trained in firearms and communications security tactics. They are often coordinated, and they are increasingly global.

Another example: The Russian Imperial Movement's leadership was finally named as Specially Designated Global Terrorists last year, by Secretary Pompeo, after recruiting and training followers for urban assaults, like the one its trainees carried out in Gothenburg, Sweden. Combat 18, which started in the United Kingdom, has similarly organized around neo-Nazi principles, and as recently as 2019, was linked to the assassination of a German politician.

In recent years, we have seen individual Americans reaching out to foreign groups, and connecting over common ideology, tactics, and training. A handful of Americans have even sought to travel overseas to take up arms and fight alongside these groups. We saw it, for instance, in September 2019 when a U.S. Army soldier at Fort Riley—who was planning to travel to Ukraine to fight with the Azov Battalion, a paramilitary militia—was arrested for distributing bomb-making instructions.

We have seen this for 20 years as individual Americans get radicalized on-line, seek out groups, like al-Qaeda in Yemen, and share tactics, ideology, and, in some cases, carry out deadly attacks on the United States. Just as we in the Government have spent significant effort to root out all these individual Americans, so, too, should we care about American White supremacists sharing tactics and training across National lines.

To that end, given the threat of violence from White supremacist extremists, we need to look to their links to foreign organizations, especially as the barriers to communicate, plan, recruit, and train internationally with our ideological sympathizers has nearly disappeared.

My colleagues here this morning were also with me on January 6 as we experienced a first-hand manifestation of the threat we are going to talk about today. We all saw the havoc domestic terrorists and other rioters caused as they tried to upend our democratic process, and we mourn the loss of life that resulted.

As the dust settles from the attack, and hundreds of the insurrectionists have been charged with an assortment of crimes, we are beginning to see the connections between some of the more organized groups connected to that attack, and sympathetic groups that have taken root in parts of Europe, Australia, and elsewhere.

For example, the Proud Boys, which has had a number of its members indicted on conspiracy charges around January 6, has

spawned local chapters, not just in the United States, but in Britain, Norway, and Australia. Canada is so concerned about the Proud Boys that they have made the decision to list them as a foreign terrorist organization, along with The Base and the Atomwaffen Division. This is something we will need to discuss here today.

I spent a significant amount of time examining the connections between terrorists and their networks in the Middle East in my prior life, before running for Congress, and I have been surprised by the vast amount of publicly-available information that demonstrates the international connections of some of these U.S.-based extremist groups, especially ones promoting a White supremacist ideology.

We can see for ourselves that these domestic groups are generating, and, in many cases, exporting a unique brand of terrorism. They are learning lessons from plots, propaganda, and attacks that are similarly driven by hate and violence abroad.

The State Department's move last year to designate the Russian Imperial Movement as one of these SDGTs, or specifically designated global terrorists, was an unprecedented and important first step to begin addressing the threat, but it didn't go nearly far enough, and the time and the time is now to take further action.

Earlier this month, I sent a letter to Secretary of State Tony Blinken, asking him to use publicly available evidence, along with intelligence our Government has, to determine whether certain foreign White supremacist groups should be labeled as foreign terrorist organizations under the Department of State's formal processing criteria. If they couldn't go as far as listing them as an FTO, I asked that they consider labeling them an SDGT, a specially designated global terrorist group.

If designated as an FTO, the United States can limit a foreign group's financial property and travel interests. An SDGT designation allows for the blocking of the group's assets as well as those associated individuals, or subgroups, but this designation does not restrict travel to the United States, though it flags those individuals in numerous watch lists.

In the Department's response to me, which we just received last week, which I deeply appreciate, the State Department emphasized that a lack of updated credible information and intelligence about these foreign groups is one of the "important limitations" they face when considering groups for designation.

This is an issue I will be raising directly with the intelligence community this week. I had hoped to raise these issues with leadership from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence today. Unfortunately, they were unable to participate in this hearing.

Nonetheless, I am eager to hear from our witnesses about the level and quality of intelligence we have collected on these organizations thus far, and how we can ensure that the State Department has the information and tools it needs to make these designations if they are deemed to meet the appropriate criteria.

The challenge of domestic violent extremism is one that we need to confront and take on here at home within our communities, and with careful respect for our domestic laws, civil rights, and civil lib-

erties. But any solution will require an understanding of these transnational ties and trends, as well as coordination with our allies.

Additionally, we need to see a much more robust, coordinated effort between Government and private-sector companies to take on this challenge, particularly the companies that operate social media platforms, which we know are abused to spread racially and ethnically motivated extremist ideology world-wide.

For our Government, this issue sits at a crossroads of 2 agencies uniquely charged with keeping us safe at home, and encouraging peace, liberty, and prosperity abroad. Their different vantage points will shed light on this topic, and help us understand how Congress can effectively confront violent extremist threats that are rapidly taking root in communities large and small across the country.

I look forward to hearing how your agencies are engaged in this fight, and how we, as Members of Congress, can help.

[The statement of Chairwoman Slotkin follows:]

STATEMENT OF CHAIRWOMAN ELISSA SLOTKIN

APRIL 29, 2021

I want to thank our witnesses from the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of State for being here today to discuss a complex and pressing topic that deals directly with our safety here at home. As the President said last night: “We won’t ignore what our intelligence agencies have determined to be the most lethal terrorist threat to the homeland today: White supremacy is terrorism.”

With that in mind, our subcommittee is meeting today to explore the threats posed by transnational racially and ethnically motivated violent extremists, or RMVEs.

Our focus today is on the connections between individuals and groups here in the United States, who use violence to further their racially or ethnically driven political goals; and the growing number of foreign groups who share their aims, ideologies, and violent designs. While the information our intelligence community has on some of these foreign groups is admittedly less than we’d like, the IC has assessed that domestic racially and ethnically motivated violent extremist groups which advocate for the superiority of the White race have “the most persistent and concerning transnational connections” of all U.S. domestic violent extremists.

Through these connections, they spread propaganda, train, and attempt to collaborate in carrying out violent acts. Given their relative ease of travel and communication, labeling these groups, their leaders, and their supporters as what they are is all the more important to curb this threat at home and abroad.

That said, it remains true that foreign groups with transnational ties span a broad range of ideologies, including everyone from White supremacists and radical Islamic terrorists. This isn’t a new or unfamiliar threat: It’s one we’ve confronted in various forms, for decades. But over the past few years, the United States and countries around the world have seen a surge in violence and terrorism perpetrated by these kinds of organizations. This isn’t just an American threat, it’s a global one.

Many of these foreign groups are downright eager to use deadly violence to advance their goals. They are often heavily-armed, such as the Nordic Resistance Movement. They are trained in firearms and communications security tactics. They are often coordinated. And they are increasingly global.

Another example: The Russian Imperial Movement’s leadership was finally named as specially designated global terrorists last year, by Secretary Pompeo, after recruiting and training followers for urban assaults—like the one its trainees carried out in Gothenburg, Sweden. Combat 18, which started in the United Kingdom, has similarly organized around neo-Nazi principles, and as recently as 2019 was linked to the assassination of a German politician.

In recent years, we’ve seen individual Americans reaching out to foreign groups, and connecting over common ideology, tactics, and training. A handful of Americans have even sought to travel overseas to take up arms and fight alongside these groups. We saw it, for instance, in September 2019, when a U.S. Army soldier at Fort Riley—who was planning to travel to Ukraine to fight with the Azov Battalion,



a paramilitary militia—was arrested for distributing bomb-making instructions. We have seen this for 20 years, as individual Americans get radicalized on-line, seek out groups like al-Qaeda in Yemen, and share tactics, ideology, and—in some cases—carry out deadly attacks in the United States. Just as we in the Government have spent significant effort to root out all these individual Americans, so too should we care about American White supremacists sharing tactics and training across National lines.

To that end, given the threats of violence from White supremacist extremists, we need to look at their links to foreign organizations—especially as the barriers to communicate, plan, recruit, and train internationally with their ideological sympathizers and partners have nearly disappeared.

My colleagues here this morning were also with me on January 6, as we experienced a firsthand manifestation of the threat we are going to talk about today. We all saw the havoc domestic terrorists and other rioters caused as they tried to upend our democratic process, and we mourn the loss of life that resulted. As the dust settles from that attack—and hundreds of the insurrectionists have been charged with an assortment of crimes—we are beginning to see connections between some of the more organized groups connected to that attack, and sympathetic groups that have taken root in parts of Europe, Australia, and elsewhere. For example, The Proud Boys, which has had a number of its members indicted on conspiracy charges around January 6, has spawned local chapters not just across the United States but also in Britain, Norway, and Australia. Canada is so concerned that they have made the decision to list the Proud Boys, as well as The Base and the Atomwaffen Division, as foreign terrorist organizations. That is something we will need to discuss here today.

I spent a significant amount of my career examining the connections between terrorists and their networks in the Middle East, and I've been surprised by the vast amount of publicly available information that demonstrates the international connections of some of these U.S.-based violent extremist groups, especially ones promoting a White supremacist ideology. We can see for ourselves that these domestic groups are generating—and, in many cases, are exporting—a unique brand of terrorism. And, they're learning lessons from plots, propaganda, and attacks that are similarly driven by hate and violence abroad.

The State Department's move last year to designate the Russian Imperial Movement as a Specially-Designated Global Terrorist (or SDGT) group was an unprecedented and important first step in beginning to address this threat, but it didn't go nearly far enough, and the time to take further action is now.

Earlier this month, I sent a letter to Secretary of State Blinken asking him to use publicly-available evidence, along with intelligence our government has, to determine whether certain foreign White supremacist groups should be labeled as Foreign Terrorist Organizations, under the Department of State's formal process and criteria. If they couldn't be labeled an FTO, I asked that they be labeled an SDGT. If designated as an FTO, the United States can limit a foreign group's financial, property, and travel interests. An SDGT designation allows for the blocking of the group's assets, as well as those of associated individuals or subgroups—but this designation does not restrict travel to the United States, though it likely flags those individuals in our numerous watch lists.

In the Department's response to me, which we received last week, the State Department emphasized that a lack of updated, credible information and intelligence about these foreign groups is one of the "important limitations" they face when considering groups for designation. This is an issue I'll be raising directly with the intelligence community this week. I had hoped to raise this issue with leadership from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence today, but unfortunately they were unable to participate in this hearing. Nonetheless, I'm eager to hear from our witnesses about the level and quality of the intelligence we've collected on these organizations thus far and how we can ensure the State Department has the information and tools it needs to make these designations, if they're deemed to meet the appropriate criteria.

The challenge of domestic violent extremism is one that we need to confront and take on here at home, within our communities, and with careful respect for our domestic laws, civil rights, and civil liberties. But any solution will require an understanding of these transnational ties and trends, as well as coordination with our allies. Additionally, we need to see a much more robust, coordinated effort between Government and private-sector companies to take on this challenge—particularly companies that operate social media platforms, which we know are abused to spread racially and ethnically motivated extremist ideology, world-wide.

For our Government, this issue sits at the crossroads of two agencies, uniquely charged with keeping us safe at home, and encouraging peace, liberty, and pros-

perity abroad. Their different vantage points will shed important light on this topic, and help us understand how Congress can effectively confront the violent extremist threats that are rapidly taking root in communities large and small across the country, and across the world.

I look forward to hearing how your agencies are engaged in this fight and how we, as Members of Congress, can help.

Ms. SLOTKIN. The Chair now recognizes the Ranking Member of the subcommittee, the gentleman from Texas, Mr. Pfluger, for an opening statement.

Mr. PFLUGER. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thanks for holding this hearing.

I appreciate the opportunity to talk to our incredible witnesses as well, Mr. Cohen, the coordinator for counterterrorism, and assistant secretary for counterterrorism and threat prevention, and Mr. John Godfrey. I appreciated the opportunity to speak with them before-hand and have some good conversations, and I think their credibility, their professional career will add much to this discussion, and really, you know, bring out the facts on what threat we are facing and how we as a country can better deal with that.

As I said in our first official hearing on this subcommittee, it is incumbent upon all of us to ensure that we are doing everything we can to search those facts, to understand the threat landscape, to be a threat-based committee that is not a partisan issue. This is a non-partisan piece of work for us to protect our homeland, and that is really the most important thing.

Whether it is domestic violent extremists or foreign organizations, we need to search that out for intelligence. The intelligence piece of this committee is extremely important for us to understand the facts, to come up with a game plan, and to adequately equip the organizations that sit within our jurisdiction so that they can do their job to continue to protect us. So, I am glad to find that we are continuing to search out key areas of bipartisanship where we can do so.

Racially and ethnically motivated violent extremism, along with anti-Government, or anti-authority violent extremism, and every category of domestic terrorism, cannot be tolerated, not by our law enforcement, not by our prosecutors, not by us in Congress, and not by the American public. Those who commit crimes in furtherance of extremist agendas, no matter what their ideology is, must be held accountable to the fullest extent of the law, and that is why we are here today to talk about that.

I think it is important for all of us on this subcommittee, and for Congress as a whole, to also recognize that our foreign adversaries who are out there every single day, as our National Security Strategy has stated, whether it is China, Russia, Iran, North Korea, they are continually attempting, and succeeding in some points, at dividing the American public through amplification of extremist messaging, through on-line platforms, if foreign governments are attempting to influence the American people through social media.

Whether it is to impact an election or breed hate amongst our citizens, I believe it is a problem. It is a problem that is not new, but what is new at this point in time is the rapidity and the speed in which these organizations can reach every-day citizens in our country because of those social media platforms. I hope that we can get into that today to look at that.

But on the other side of the problem, we do, as the Chair said—and, Madam Chair, thank you very much for mentioning the fact that the balance intention here is really to make sure that the protected rights, the First Amendment rights, remain protected.

I think it is also incumbent for us to look at the fact that, you know, we as a country, I think we can look at this as the sky is falling, or we can also look at it as these are mostly lone-wolf actions, and these lone-wolf actions are very difficult to identify and to predict, and then, to do something about, and that is why we are here today is to talk about those ways of doing it.

But, as an American society, as a culture, and for somebody who has spent my career fighting against all sorts of the threats around the globe, you know, I think we should look at our system of justice and the law enforcement agents and those who are studying this on a daily basis and say, you know, there is a bright side to this, that the organization, and from my conversations with our witnesses today, it seems to be a lone-wolf type of a threat instead of a very organized threat that we see in some of the foreign terrorist organizations, like al-Qaeda, like ISIS, and others that have organized to the point where they are affecting society as a whole. So, let's dig into that, and let's not be afraid to look at those facts.

It is on points like these that I look forward to working with Chair Slotkin, and other Members of the subcommittee, to address the variety of challenges that we are facing. The threat landscape today is vast. It is far and wide, whether we are dealing with cyber attacks from China, ISIS; whether it is in Syria or terrorism, domestic terrorism here on American soil, there is a lot of work to be done.

We need to look forward to working with the Executive branch agencies, the partners there that are combating the threat of terrorism, both internationally and domestically, day in and day out, and we thank them for that. So, I absolutely look forward to the contents of this hearing.

I think that it is also important to admit and to look today at what is happening along our border, and it is—as an Intelligence and Counterterrorism Subcommittee, we really need to look at the intelligence that we are putting, and the emphasis that we are putting on the surge at our Southern Border. Let's not be, you know, distracted by one word or another.

But if we have folks that are on terror lists that are getting into this country, then the threat of domestic terrorism will continue to rise in this country, because once they get into this country, they are now domestic. So, let's talk about that.

While the contents of this hearing are going to be focused on a different subject, I do look forward, Madam Chair, to putting that forth to our agencies and those under our jurisdiction to really understand whether it is on the Northern Border in the racially-motivated extremist groups that do threaten us, or whether it is on the Southern Border in groups that we may not know having access to our country. It is a threat to our homeland.

So, I thank our witnesses. I thank, Madam Chair, your leadership to get to the bottom of this, to have a fact-based conversation, and to truly dig in and protect the American people, according to

our oath sworn to the Constitution. So with that, I yield back. Thank you for your time.

[The statement of Ranking Member Pfluger follows:]

STATEMENT OF HONORABLE AUGUST PFLUGER

Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate you holding this hearing today and thank you to our witnesses: John Cohen, coordinator for counterterrorism and assistant secretary for counterterrorism and threat prevention, and John Godfrey, acting coordinator for counterterrorism and acting special envoy for the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS.

As I said in our first official hearing as a subcommittee, it is incumbent upon those of us on this subcommittee to ensure that we are doing everything we can to protect Americans from domestic violent extremists and I'm glad that we're continuing to find points of bipartisanship where we can do so.

Racially and ethnically motivated violent extremism, along with anti-Government or anti-authority violent extremism, and every other category of domestic terrorism, cannot be tolerated: Not by our law enforcement and prosecutors; not by us in Congress; and not by the American public. Those who commit crimes in furtherance of extremist agendas, no matter their ideology, must be held accountable to the fullest extent of the law.

I think it's important for all of us on the subcommittee, and for Congress as a whole, to also recognize that foreign adversaries like China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea, are continually attempting, and succeeding, at dividing the American people through amplifying extremist messaging through on-line platforms. Foreign governments attempting to influence the American people through social media, whether it's to impact an election or to breed hate amongst our citizens, I believe is a problem we all—on both sides of the aisle—agree must to be dealt with.

It's on points like these that I look forward to working with Chair Slotkin and the other Members of the subcommittee to address the variety of challenges which we are currently facing.

The threat landscape today stretches far and wide—whether we are dealing with a cyber attack from China, ISIS in Syria, or terrorism here on American soil. There is a lot of work to be done. We look forward to working with our Executive branch partners to continue to combat the threat of terrorism both internationally and domestically. I look forward to hearing more about how we can support and further these efforts in relation to RMVE from an agency perspective.

I thank our witnesses for their willingness to appear before the subcommittee, today, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. SLOTKIN. I thank the Ranking Member.

Members are also reminded that the subcommittee will operate according to the guidelines laid out by the Chairman and Ranking Member of the full committee in their February 3 colloquy regarding remote procedures. Member statements may be submitted for the record:

[The statements of Chairman Thompson and Honorable Jackson Lee follow:]

STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN BENNIE G. THOMPSON

APRIL 29, 2021

We are here today to talk about racially and ethnically motivated violent extremists or RMVEs.

Last month, the director of national intelligence published a report on the heightened threat posed by domestic violent extremists. The report warned that U.S.-based RMVE actors “who promote the superiority of the White race” possess the most “persistent and concerning transnational connections” because they “frequently communicate with and seek to influence each other.” The Department of Homeland Security's *Homeland Threat Assessment*, or HTA, released in the fall also called attention to this concern.

The HTA acknowledged that White supremacist extremists have conducted outreach abroad to spread their message, increasing the risk of mobilization to violence and travel to conflict zones. White supremacist RMVE actors are often inspired by the acts of like-minded individuals abroad. They exchange tactics and techniques for

their violent plots, and they have even set up or inspired the creation of affiliate groups.

It is time for our treatment of foreign RMVE threats to be consistent with how we treat other foreign terrorist threats. When we faced this same challenge in the context of al-Qaeda, the Islamic state, home-grown violent extremists, and other Sunni and Shia jihadists, the U.S. Government and private-sector partners rose to the occasion to combat the threat. Indeed, our legal and counterterrorism tools are different for domestic actors as opposed to international ones. However, the individuals, groups, and movements we are here to speak about today possess concrete links overseas.

For instance, several of the individuals associated with the Rise Above Movement—a California-based White supremacist group—who were initially charged for violence during the deadly Charlottesville rally, appear to have traveled to Europe to meet with members of European White supremacist extremist groups. More recently, the FBI is reportedly probing whether foreign governments, groups, or individuals funded some January 6 Capitol rioters using Bitcoin.

The January 6 attack will undoubtedly serve as a watershed moment for RMVE actors across the globe—and we cannot ignore how the event is affecting our allies and others abroad. And as COVID-19 protocols begin to loosen, we must be forward-thinking about how RMVE actors might again engage in travel and lead to a greater risk of violence. By not taking action or taking inconsistent action—whether by failing to prioritize the threat, educate the public on it, or using the tools we have at our disposal to counter it—we condone the actions of White supremacists at home and abroad.

We must abandon our traditional passive approach to this issue and instead be creative in our solutions. And we can do these things while upholding the Constitution. This subcommittee held a similar joint hearing on this topic last Congress with non-Governmental subject-matter experts. This time, it is great to have DHS and the State Department in front of us to talk about the issue—specifically how they are prioritizing it and what they are doing to combat it.

Before I conclude, I would be remiss if I did not express my disappointment that the report required in Section 5602 of the fiscal year 2020 National Defense Authorization Act—which would provide policy makers and the public with extensive domestic and international terrorism data—is now more than 10 months past due. This data is crucial for Members of Congress to accurately understand the threat and effectively legislate on it. I would request that our DHS witness provide us with an update on the status of this report today.

I look forward to having a productive conversation on this topic and working with both Departments on solutions.

---

STATEMENT OF HONORABLE SHEILA JACKSON LEE

APRIL 29, 2021

Thank you, Chairwoman Slotkin and Ranking Member Pfluger for holding today's hearing on "Racially and Ethnically Motivated Violent Extremism: The Transnational Threat."

It is a well-known fact that before you can begin to address any problem, you must first recognize the symptoms.

There have been symptoms of racially and ethnically motivated violent extremism in the United States for too many years and deaths proving its presence in too many communities in this country.

This hearing will provide Members of this committee with an opportunity to discuss:

- the international and transnational racially or ethnically motivated violent extremist (RMVE) threat landscape;
- the spread of RMVE narratives and counternarratives; and
- how the U.S. Departments of State and Homeland Security are addressing the threats.

I look forward to the testimony of today's witnesses:

- Mr. John Cohen, assistant secretary for counterterrorism and threat prevention, Department of Homeland Security (DHS),
- Mr. John T. Godfrey, acting coordinator for counterterrorism and acting special envoy for the global coalition to defeat ISIS, Department of State.

The escalation in violent domestic attacks over the last decade has made it clear that domestic terrorism is a problem.

The rise in violence is linked to the presence of racially/ethnically motivated violent extremists (RMVEs).

Of all domestic terrorist actors, RMVEs who promote the superiority of the white race present the most persistent and concerning transnational connections.

RMVEs who advocate for the superiority of the white race are not new but the proficiency with which these organizations operationally employ and share techniques, tactics, and procedures—especially over the last several years—is alarming and must be taken seriously.

Although some elements of the U.S. Government have recently been more aggressive in tackling the threat from transnational and foreign RMVE threats, more must be done.

In comparison with our allies, the U.S. Government is seemingly lagging in addressing the transnational threat from RMVE actors, especially when it comes to designating RMVE organizations and individuals with international ties as foreign terrorist organizations or specially designated global terrorists.

The U.S. must work with our allies in a coordinated and cohesive fashion to counter the transnational threat from RMVE actors.

#### RECENT TERRORIST ATTACKS IN THE UNITED STATES

April 15, 2013—The Boston attacks were tragic killing 3 and injuring more than 260 men, women and children awaiting the arrival of runners in the Boston Marathon.

On November 28, 2016, 11 individuals were injured in an incident at Ohio State University when Abdul Razaq Ali Artan drove a car into a crowd and also wounded individuals with a knife.

On July 17, 2016, an offender shot and killed 6 police officers in Baton Rouge, LA. Three of the officers died and 3 were hospitalized.

On July 7, 2016, an offender shot and killed 5 police officers and wounded 11 others (9 police officers and 2 civilians) in Dallas, TX. The offender was killed by police with a remotely guided robot loaded with an explosive.

On June 12, 2016, an armed assailant shot and killed 49 people and non-fatally wounded over 50 others in an Orlando, FL Pulse Nightclub. After a 3-hour standoff with police, the assailant was killed by police.

On December 2, 2015, 2 offenders killed 14 people and wounded 21 others in San Bernardino, CA at a social services center. Both offenders were killed by police while resisting arrest.

On November 27, 2015, at a Planned Parenthood clinic, in Colorado Springs, CO, a lone offender shot and killed 3 people and wounded another 9 people with a semi-automatic rifle before surrendering to the Police after a 5-hour standoff.

On July 16, 2015, in Chattanooga, TN, a lone offender killed 5 people and wounded another person at a military recruitment office and naval reserve center, before he was killed by police.

On June 17, 2015, in Charleston, SC, a lone offender shot and killed 9 parishioners and wounded another parishioner with .45 caliber pistol at the historic Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church.

October 1, 2017—Las Vegas Mass Shooting, killed 60 and wounded over 1,000 when a gunman opened fire on a crowd attending the Route 91 Harvest music festival on the Las Vegas Strip in Nevada.

March 22, 2018—Austin Serial Bombings occurred between March 2 and March 22, 2018, when 5 package bombs exploded, killing 2 people and injuring another 5. The suspect, 23-year-old Mark Anthony Conditt of Pflugerville, Texas, blew himself up inside his vehicle after he was pulled over by police on March 21, also injuring a police officer.

August 3, 2019—El Paso Texas, a mass shooting occurred at a Walmart store in El Paso, Texas, United States. A gunman shot and killed 23 people and injured 23 others in his attempt to harm persons he perceived as being Hispanic.

March 16, 2021—In the Atlanta Suburbs 8 people were killed by a 21-year-old leaving a city in and community in shock and mourning that extends to communities and cities throughout the Nation and around world.

March 22, 2021—in Colorado a 21-year-old suspect killed 10 people at a Colorado supermarket—which included Boulder police Officer Eric Talley, 51, father of 7 children.

According to the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), in the immediate aftermath of Election Day, a wave of hate crimes and lesser hate incidents swept the country—1,094 bias incidents occurred in the first 34 days following November 8, 2016.

SPLC reports that anti-immigrant incidents (315) remain the most reported, followed by anti-black (221), anti-Muslim (112), and anti-LGBT (109). Anti-Trump incidents numbered 26 (6 of which were also anti-white in nature, with 2 non-Trump related anti-white incidents reported).

The purpose of this hearing is to receive testimony from the witnesses on the important role that local and State response to domestic terrorism has filled in homeland security.

Prior to September 11, 2001, the Federal Government had a wide range of law enforcement, National security, and benefits management agencies that collected information, but jealously guarded this information from other agencies.

The 9/11 Commission Report allowed an in-depth assessment of the failures that led to the horrific terrorist attacks against the United States that cost the lives of nearly 3,000 people.

The House Committee on Homeland Security was created to implement the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Report and ensure that resources were provided to support the mission of homeland security.

The most significant task of the committee was guiding the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security and making sure that it had all that it would need to carry out its mission.

I, along with other Members who have served on this committee since its inception, made a commitment that a terrorist attack of the magnitude that occurred on September 11, 2001 would never happen again.

From 2009 to 2018 there were 427 extremist-related killings in the U.S. Of those, 73.3 percent were committed by right-wing extremists, 23.4 percent by Islamist extremists, and 3.2 percent by left-wing extremists.

In short, 3 out of 4 killings committed by right-wing extremists in the U.S. were committed by white supremacists (313 from 2009 to 2018).

Before the January 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol, State capitols across the country were the targets of armed demonstrations, and States have grappled with other domestic terrorism incidents to include mass killings of minorities in furtherance of white supremacist ideology.

The long and blood history of white supremacy requires an approach that holds individuals accountable for their actions as a means of ending the lure of the mob as a tool of violence against targets of interest.

Reports that cite that over a hundred current or former members of the military were involved in the riot at the Capitol are shocking to some.

Unfortunately, this aspect of white supremacist violence was evident by violence committed by Proud Boys and Boogaloo adherents made clear their objectives.

My efforts to focus the attention of the military on this link was evident in an amendment I offered to the NDAA for fiscal year that was adopted

This Jackson Lee Amendment included in the House version of the NDAA directed the Secretary of Defense to report to Congress the extent, if any, of the threat to national security posed by domestic terrorist groups and organizations motivated by a belief system of white supremacy, such as the Boogaloo and Proud Boys extremists is reflected in the Conference bill.

The NDAA conference identified that the FBI is under statutory obligation, established by Section 5602 of the NDAA fiscal year 2020 (Public Law 116-92), to complete a report that would better characterize the domestic terrorist threat by requiring the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security in consultation with the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), to produce a set of comprehensive reports over 5 years.

The report is to include: A strategic intelligence threat internal to the United States; metrics on the number and type of incidents, coupled with resulting investigations, arrests, prosecutions, and analytic products, copies of the execution of domestic terrorism investigations; detailed explanations of how the FBI, DHS, and NCTC prioritize the domestic terrorism threats and incident; and descriptions regarding the type and regularity of training provided by the FBI, DHS, or NCTC to other Federal, State, and local law enforcement.

The conferees noted that the report has not been delivered to the appropriate committees and they urged the FBI Director to deliver the report without delay.

The Jackson Lee Amendment to the NDAA fiscal year 2021 sought the same information that is required under the NDAA fiscal year 2020 because of the threat posed by accelerationists and militia extremists who comprise a range of violent anti-government actors, movements, and organizations, some of which branch out of decades-old ideologies and others of which are relatively new has led to violent engagement of law enforcement.

My concern is that in the aftermath of a historic national election, the activity of violence influencers like Boogaloo Boys or Proud Boys will increase and lead to attacks becoming more frequent.

In 2018, we saw too many instances of violent extremists searching for opportunities to sow violence and disrupt democratic processes.

Boogaloo and Proud Boys are targeting constitutionally protected activity for co-option or to provide cover for attacks.

I look forward to the testimony of today's witnesses and the question and answer opportunity that will follow.

Thank you. I yield back the remainder of my time.

The efforts of this committee must shine a light where needed to inform ourselves on the things that we must do to better secure the Nation and our people from threats posed by domestic terrorist attacks.

There is no Federal law, that provides a domestic terrorism charge, and in light of the attack on the U.S. Capitol there have been renewed calls for the creation of such a statute.

The designation of new laws is not the purview of this committee, but that of the Judiciary Committee on which I serve as chair of the Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security.

Currently, at the Federal level, domestic terrorism suspects are almost always charged with a wide array of Federal crimes including but not limited to hate crimes, guns, explosives, and tax-related charges.

The list of domestic incidents continues to grow and this committee must learn all that we can from today's witnesses who can provide insight into the experiences they have in responding to and recovering from terrorist attacks.

State and local governments are the first to respond to, mediate, and recover from domestic terrorism attacks and we thank them and their leadership for your service to the Nation.

I thank the Chairwoman, and I look forward to the testimony of today's witnesses. Thank you.

Ms. SLOTKIN. I don't see Chairman Thompson here, so we will proceed, and I don't see Ranking Member Katko. So I will now welcome our panel of witnesses. Our first witness is Mr. John Godfrey, the acting coordinator for counterterrorism and acting special envoy for the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS of the Department of State.

As the acting coordinator, Mr. Godfrey leads the State Department's Bureau of Counterterrorism in developing coordinated strategies and approaches to defeat terrorism abroad and securing the counterterrorism cooperating of international partners. Prior to this role, Acting Coordinator Godfrey served as the acting deputy chief of mission for Embassy Riyadh.

Our second witness is Mr. John Cohen, the assistant secretary for counterterrorism and threat prevention for the Department of Homeland Security. Assistant Secretary Cohen has over 3 decades of experience in law enforcement, counterintelligence, and homeland security. Assistant Secretary Cohen has returned to DHS after having previously served as the counterterrorism coordinator and acting under secretary for intelligence and analysis. In this capacity, Mr. Cohen led DHS's efforts to counter violent extremism and improve information sharing.

Without objection, the witnesses' full statements will be inserted into the record. I now ask each witness to summarize his statement for 5 minutes. There is a little clock on your screen so you can check yourself, and I will start with Acting Coordinator Godfrey.



**STATEMENT OF JOHN T. GODFREY, ACTING COORDINATOR  
FOR COUNTERTERRORISM AND ACTING SPECIAL ENVOY  
FOR THE GLOBAL COALITION TO DEFEAT ISIS, UNITED  
STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

Mr. GODFREY. Chairwoman Slotkin, Ranking Member Pfluger, and distinguished Members of the subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you today. I am here today to discuss the international dimensions of what we call racially or ethnically motivated violent extremism, or RMVE—and we do, indeed, love acronyms—and the State Department’s on-going efforts to address this transnational threat. I would ask that my full written statement be entered into the record.

Just last month, we commemorated the second anniversary of the terrible attacks on 2 mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, a horror that was live-streamed and amplified by supporters on the internet for all the world to see. This massacre was shocking, but unfortunately, it was not unique. Indeed, from Christchurch and Pittsburgh to Quebec City and Hanau, we have seen an escalation in violence perpetrated by RMVE actors globally.

That is why the Biden-Harris administration has made countering RMVE, including White-identity terrorism, a top priority. The National Security Council staff is leading a comprehensive review of the domestic terrorist landscape, including RMVE, with the goal of formulating a strategic framework to address this threat. Today, I wish to focus on the transnational dimensions of this threat.

A brief note on terminology. The State Department uses the term “RMVE” for attacks perpetrated by individuals and groups aiming to advance a political agenda to defend against what they perceive as threats to their racial or ethnic identity. RMVE individuals and groups often violently target members of religious, racial, or ethnic minority groups, immigrants, LGBTQI+ persons, and governments.

Today’s digital platforms connect RMVE individuals and groups to a broad range of conspiracy theories, misinformation and disinformation, and violent extremist ideologies, fueling a perverse fear of a so-called White genocide and other exclusionary narratives and stoking calls to action.

RMVE actors often communicate through mainstream social media platforms, anonymous on-line messaging boards and gaming platforms, smaller websites with targeted audiences, and end-to-end encrypted chat applications, often using coded language and symbols.

Through these avenues, RMVE groups across the ideological spectrum, fundraise, communicate, recruit, radicalize, and inspire others to violence. They also share practical information about how to establish and run training facilities, procure fraudulent travel documents, and clandestinely move people and materiel. As a result, many RMVE attacks are carried out by lone actors who are not affiliated with a single group, but who are, instead, inspired by transnational connections, often but not only in digital space with RMVE actors abroad.

Before I outline the State Department’s efforts, let me first say a brief word about the whole-of-Government approach this administration is bringing to this fight. Domestically, the FBI and the

Department of Homeland Security have the lead on protecting the homeland from this threat, and investigating cases, including those involving RMVE.

The State Department's role begins at our borders and extends internationally. We work closely with a range of other interagency partners in this effort as well. The Secretary formally designated the counterterrorism coordinator on February 24, 2021, to coordinate the Department's global efforts to counter White-identity terrorism, fulfilling a requirement in the fiscal year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act. To that end, the Department is proactively coordinating with diplomatic posts, interagency stakeholders, academic entities, and other relevant parties to address these threats.

The State Department also has a number of tools to counter RMVE: First, terrorist designations. In April 2020, as the Chairwoman mentioned, we designated the Russian Imperial Movement and 3 of its leaders as specially-designated global terrorists, the first time we have designated RMVE actors using State Department authorities.

Second, preventing terrorist travel by RMVE actors. The State Department is actively encouraging partner governments to nominate RMVE actors as appropriate into their own National watch lists, as well as international law enforcement platforms such as INTERPOL.

Third, diplomatic engagement. The State Department proactively engages with foreign partners to bolster information sharing on RMVE, and those efforts have recently intensified.

Fourth, using public diplomacy tools, we are leveraging international platforms to build the capacity of local governments to address the RMVE threat.

Fifth, engagement with the tech sector, and this involves first informing providers of what the threat is, and, second, urging them to voluntarily establish, and then rigorously enforce, terms of service to allow them to remove on-line content that doesn't meet those terms of service.

Finally, we use our foreign assistance to build partner capacity around the world. We are committed to protecting the United States and our interests from the increasingly dangerous RMVE actors that we face, and we are leading the global community in acknowledging, understanding, and effectively addressing the transnational dimension of this RMVE threat. We very much welcome the interest of the Congress in this issue, and I look forward to your questions. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Godfrey follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JOHN T. GODFREY

APRIL 29, 2021

Chairwoman Slotkin, Ranking Member Pfluger, and distinguished Members of the subcommittee, thank you for the invitation to appear before you today. I am here today to discuss the international dimensions of what we call "racially or ethnically motivated violent extremism," or "REMVE," and the State Department's on-going efforts to address this persistent and growing transnational threat.

Just last month, we commemorated the second anniversary of the terrible attacks on 2 mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, where on March 15, 2019, a 28-year-old Australian national gunned down 51 people—a horror that was pre-planned to be live-streamed and amplified by supporters on the internet for the world to see.

Just before the attack, the perpetrator posted on-line a lurid and deranged 74-page manifesto. His writing revealed a violent racist and White supremacist world-view, expressing rage that immigration flows and demographic changes were purportedly causing what he referred to as the “replacement of the White race” around the world.

This massacre in Christchurch was shocking, but, unfortunately, it wasn’t unique. The attacker made clear in his screed that he was inspired by others who shared similar twisted views and had conducted similar attacks, including the individual who massacred nearly 80 people in Oslo, Norway, in 2011. Indeed, from Christchurch and Pittsburgh to Quebec City and Hanau, we have seen an escalation in violence perpetrated by REMVE actors around the world. And we have seen ample evidence that those individuals are increasingly interconnected, often—but not only—on-line.

This is why the Biden-Harris administration has made it a top priority to counter racially or ethnically motivated violent extremism, particularly violent White supremacist ideology. To kick off this effort, the National Security Council (NSC) staff is leading a comprehensive review of the Domestic Violent Extremism landscape, including REMVE, with the goal of building a strategic framework to address this threat. Assistant Secretary Cohen will discuss the domestic dimensions of REMVE; in the time I have before you today, I wish to focus on the international and transnational dimensions of this threat.

#### UNDERSTANDING THE “REMVE” THREAT

I’d like to begin with a brief overview of the threat landscape. The State Department is using the term REMVE for attacks perpetrated by individuals and groups aiming to advance a broader political agenda to defend against what they perceive as a threat to their racial or ethnic identity. REMVE often encompasses individuals and groups driven by an intolerant and ethno-supremacist ideology, with “White identity terrorism” the largest component of the REMVE landscape. REMVE actors engage in violence or the plotting of violence targeting: Immigrants; people of other races; Jewish, Muslim, or other ethnic or religious groups; LGBTQI+ persons, governments; and other perceived enemies. While the U.S. Government uses the term “REMVE,” partner governments, NGO’s, and others use a variety of terms to describe facets of this threat, including “far right terrorism,” “extreme right-wing terrorism,” “White identity terrorism,” and/or “White supremacist terrorism.”

Between 2015 and 2020, the U.N. Security Council’s Counterterrorism Committee tracked a 320 percent increase in “extreme right-wing terrorism” globally. In recent years, deadly REMVE attacks have occurred in Canada, France, Germany, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States, among other countries. In Singapore, authorities recently arrested a 16-year-old male who was inspired by the Christchurch attacker and planned to attack 2 mosques on the anniversary of that horrendous event. This was a rare and isolated incident for the country, demonstrating the reach of these pernicious ideologies. Violent White supremacist and neo-Nazi groups have also become increasingly prominent and vocal in a number of Western countries, with a corresponding rise in attacks.

To effectively tackle the threat posed by REMVE actors, we need to understand the motivations and ideologies that fuel the horrific crimes they commit. The ongoing misuse of today’s digital platforms can connect REMVE individuals and groups to a broad range of conspiracy theories, mis- and disinformation, and violent extremist ideologies, many of which may be protected speech under the First Amendment. While these informal on-line communities make it difficult to encapsulate one overarching REMVE narrative, REMVE ideologies often encompass anti-Semitism, drawing extensively from Nazi-era propaganda. REMVE actors are frequently influenced by works of hate and paranoia that provide an ideological framework for their violent actions. These narratives fuel a call to action by fomenting a perverse fear of “White genocide,” and feed into other exclusionary narratives globally.

It’s also important to understand how REMVE individuals and groups organize and operate. In some aspects, REMVE actors function similarly to Islamist terrorists, such as members of al-Qaeda, ISIS, and Hizballah. Like Islamist terrorists, REMVE actors are part of a global and interconnected on-line community. They exploit the internet to propagandize, radicalize, recruit, and inspire individuals, incite violence, raise funds, organize training, plot attacks, and broadcast their attacks world-wide. But in other important respects, REMVE actors tend to operate differently. Unlike ISIS or al-Qaeda, REMVE actors often have a more diffuse organizational structure. Most do not have clear leadership or command-and-control structures to coordinate attacks—or clear membership or affiliation. They also often lack

a physical safe haven or territory they control where they can operate with complete impunity.

While many attacks by individuals and groups are self-funded, REMVE actors do raise money from a variety of licit and illicit sources, including merchandise and music sales, donations from individuals, criminal activity such as narcotics and weapons trafficking and selling counterfeit goods, and providing military-style training to other extremists. In contrast with Islamist terrorists, who often rely on informal financial institutions and networks, REMVE groups often use formal financial institutions, such as banks and monetary transmitters, to move funds domestically and internationally. Several REMVE groups are also known to use crowd-funding platforms and virtual currency to solicit donations and effect money transfers.

The U.S. Government is deeply concerned about the extent of the transnational links between REMVE actors world-wide. REMVE actors often communicate through mainstream social media platforms, anonymous on-line message boards, on-line gaming platforms, smaller websites with targeted audiences, and end-to-end encrypted chat applications, often using coded language and symbols. Through these avenues, REMVE groups across the ideological spectrum fundraise, communicate, recruit, radicalize, and inspire others to violence. They also share practical information about how to establish and run training facilities, procure fraudulent travel documents, fabricate explosives and obtain weapons, and clandestinely move people and materiel. As a result, many REMVE attacks are carried out by lone actors with no affiliation to a single group, who are inspired by a transnational REMVE movement or movements with adherents around the globe who connect virtually on-line. Part of this phenomenon includes violent White supremacists traveling overseas to train and fight with like-minded individuals in foreign conflict zones. U.S.-based REMVE actors have also been known to communicate with and travel abroad to engage in person with foreign REMVE actors, primarily in Europe and in countries such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa.

#### COUNTERING THE “REMVE” THREAT

The United States is taking concrete and specific actions to counter the complex and evolving REMVE threat world-wide. Before I outline the State Department’s efforts, let me first say a word about the whole-of-Government approach the administration is bringing to this fight. Domestically, the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security have the lead in protecting the homeland from this threat and investigating cases of DVE, including those involving REMVE. In turn, the State Department’s role begins at our borders and extends internationally. We work closely with interagency partners, including the FBI, DHS, the Department of Justice, the Department of Treasury, U.S. Agency for International Development, and the U.S. intelligence community, and use tools similar to those we have effectively used against terrorist threats, such as those posed by ISIS and al-Qaeda.

To bring all our counterterrorism tools to the fight against REMVE, the Secretary formally designated the CT Coordinator on February 24, 2021 to coordinate the Department’s global efforts to counter “White identity terrorism,” fulfilling a requirement in the fiscal year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). To that end, the State Department is proactively coordinating with our diplomatic posts, interagency partners, academic entities, and other relevant stakeholders to better understand and address “White identity terrorism” and the broader REMVE threat. We are also collaborating with interagency partners to develop a Department strategy to counter REMVE abroad, and we have contracted a Federally-Funded Research and Development Center (FFRDC) to conduct an independent study to map global connections between REMVE actors, in line with the NDAA.

#### *Countering Terrorist Financing and Travel*

The State Department has a broad range of tools to counter REMVE. First, the State Department utilizes our counterterrorism-related designation authorities to counter the REMVE threat. In April 2020, we designated the Russian Imperial Movement (RIM), a group that provides paramilitary-style training to neo-Nazis and White supremacists, and 3 of its leaders as specially-designated global terrorists (SDGTs). In August 2016, 2 Swedish men traveled to St. Petersburg and underwent 11 days of paramilitary-style training provided by RIM. A few months later, these men and another individual conducted a series of terrorist attacks in Gothenburg, Sweden. Designating RIM was an unprecedented step—it was the first time the United States has designated a foreign White supremacist organization as an SDGT. This action was enabled by the September 2019 amendments to Executive Order 13224, expanding State’s ability to designate leaders of terrorist groups or those that participate in terrorist training.

We will not hesitate to continue using our counterterrorism-related designation authorities against all terrorist and violent extremist groups, regardless of ideology, as appropriate. The State Department actively assesses REMVE groups and/or individuals abroad, including for potential designation under our authorities. An important limitation is the availability of sufficient credible information that meets standards for those designations. Nonetheless, we will continue to actively review all credible sources of information to assess whether foreign REMVE groups and/or individuals meet the criteria for designation under States' authorities.

Second, we play a leading role in preventing terrorist travel, including by REMVE actors. The State Department is actively encouraging partner governments to nominate REMVE actors, as appropriate, into their own National watch lists as well as international law enforcement platforms, including that of INTERPOL. We also continue to negotiate and implement bilateral terrorism screening arrangements with select foreign partners, which allows us to exchange watch list identities with those partners. These efforts augment both U.S. and foreign partners' border screening systems. Continuing an effort that dates to 9/11, the State Department is also taking steps to bolster the biometric and traveler targeting border security capabilities of key international partners, including in Europe. These initiatives provide capacity that enables partner nations to better identify and disrupt terrorist travel, including that of REMVE actors.

#### *Diplomatic Engagement and Public Diplomacy*

Third, through diplomatic engagement via our embassies abroad, the State Department has emphasized to our foreign partners that this issue is a priority for the Biden-Harris administration, and encouraged increased information sharing on this critical subject. To underscore this message, in March, we sent a global *démarche* to all of our posts highlighting this administration's focus on these issues, and seeking information from all of our partners on REMVE. We have been hearing back from our partners that REMVE is a serious concern and a top priority for many of them as well, and they are eager to bolster cooperation and collaboration in this area. We are also engaging our foreign partners, as well as technology sector and civil society partners, through multilateral venues, such as the Council of Europe (CoE), the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF), the industry-led Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism (GIFCT), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Hedayah (the CVE Center based in Abu Dhabi), and the United Nations (UN), on REMVE. In October 2020, for example, we partnered with Germany and the United Kingdom to convene a virtual event at the United Nations General Assembly to improve information sharing between partner nations and explore REMVE actors' transnational linkages. On April 21 and earlier today, the United States participated in high-level virtual dialogs on REMVE under the banner of the GCTF—a gathering of 30 like-minded partners from across the globe. We are also co-leading with Germany a new Financial Action Task Force (FATF) initiative to counter REMVE financing.

Fourth, public diplomacy is an effective tool in preventing and countering REMVE. We are leveraging existing international platforms, such as the Strong Cities Network (SCN) and the City Pair Program, to build the capacity of local governments from Australia to Canada to address the REMVE threat. In October 2021, the SCN will bring local and National government officials from the Czech and Slovak Republics together to discuss strategies for preventing and countering REMVE. And in December 2021, representatives of the German cities of Halle and Rostock will visit Atlanta and Savanna for a REMVE-focused City Pair Program, which is a two-way exchange program we created in 2014 to help cities address the flow of foreign terrorist fighters to Syria and Iraq. We do this in close partnership with DHS's Office of Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention (TVTP). Through the State Department's International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP), we have also introduced international government and law enforcement officials to strategies used by the U.S. Government and private sector to prevent attacks on public gathering places and other soft targets, such as houses of worship, which can be targeted by REMVE actors. The State Department also funds programs related to democracy, pluralism, human rights, and tolerance to prevent and counter recruitment and radicalization to violence related to REMVE. For instance, we support the participation of French universities in the "Peer to Peer: Countering Hate and Intolerance" program, which empowers university students to develop on-line and off-line messaging campaigns to counter REMVE and anti-Semitic narratives in their communities.

We have also increased awareness among foreign audiences by amplifying the testimony of "formers" through speaker programs. These are individuals who were previously involved in REMVE, have realized the error of their ways, and are now

uniquely qualified to dissuade others from becoming radicalized to violence. In December 2019, just ahead of COVID-19, we sent a former neo-Nazi to Austria and Belgium to share insights about his radicalization and deradicalization journeys, and to discuss his community-based rehabilitation and reintegration programs for REMVE actors. Through the first-hand accounts of “formers,” our allies are better understanding the nature of REMVE and developing more tailored strategies to confront this threat.

#### *Engagement with the Tech Sector*

Fifth, the State Department engages with the international community and tech companies in the vitally important effort to counter the use of the internet by REMVE actors for terrorist purposes. The reliance of REMVE actors on on-line platforms to radicalize, recruit, communicate, and organize to violence makes this line of effort particularly consequential. We have shaped and mobilized international support on 2 high-level calls for action: The *G20 Osaka Leaders’ Statement on Preventing Exploitation of the Internet for Terrorism and Violent Extremism Conducive to Terrorism (VECT)* and the *G7 Biarritz Strategy for an Open, Free, and Secure Digital Transformation*. These documents reflect and protect important American values, such as freedom of speech. We have long held and continue to believe that the most effective remedy for objectionable speech isn’t censorship; it’s more engagement. As a result, these documents uphold freedom of expression by promoting credible alternative rhetoric rather than endorsing approaches that rely on coercing ideologues into silence. In addition, Osaka and Biarritz stress the importance of voluntary, collaborative efforts with the tech sector over regulation that threatens the innovation that has made the internet an engine of prosperity, creativity, and connectivity.

The State Department, in partnership and coordinating with other departments and agencies such as the National Counterterrorism Center, also has engaged tech companies to voluntarily share information on terrorist trends and tactics and encouraged tech companies to consider voluntarily removing REMVE-related content when appropriate by enforcing their respective terms of service that forbid the use of their platforms for terrorist purposes while maintaining full respect for the right to freedom of expression. For example, following the designation of RIM as an SDGT, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Google/YouTube decided to remove RIM accounts and content from their platforms. This was an important step, though government designations are not required for companies to be able to take action against bad actors on their platforms.

#### *Foreign Partners’ Capacity Building*

Finally, the State Department is beginning to use our foreign assistance funding to build foreign partners’ capacity to address the REMVE threat. In October 2020, we supported the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law (IJJ) in launching a new initiative focused on how criminal justice practitioners can address REMVE. This initiative, which we co-led with the United Kingdom, gathered more than 40 policy makers and practitioners from 19 countries to develop a good practices guide with concrete steps to confront this threat. Influenced by the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) principles, the guide includes good practices on the types of counterterrorism tools and legislation countries should consider to effectively tackle the REMVE threat, and how criminal justice actors should work with non-Governmental actors, including social media companies and community leaders. That guide will be launched later this year and help equip criminal justice practitioners tackling REMVE threats around the world.

#### CONCLUSION

Protecting the United States and our interests against all forms of terrorism, including REMVE, remains a top priority for the U.S. Government and the State Department. The scale and complexity of REMVE threats around the world reflect how the terrorist landscape has evolved to become more diverse, challenging, and global, as terrorists spread their twisted ideas with unprecedented speed and scope via modern technology. As I said before, the State Department’s authorities are focused on the international dimension of this threat, yet this is a problem that involves connections between REMVE actors here at home and abroad. We are committed to leading the global community in recognizing and effectively addressing the transnational dimension of the REMVE threat. We welcome the interest of the Congress in this issue and I wish to thank you again for the opportunity to testify before you today. I look forward to your questions.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Great. Thank you for your testimony.

I now recognize Assistant Secretary Cohen to summarize his statement for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF JOHN COHEN, COUNTERTERRORISM COORDINATOR AND ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR COUNTERTERRORISM AND THREAT PREVENTION, UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY**

Mr. COHEN. Chairwoman Slotkin, Ranking Member Pfluger, Members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to be here with you today to discuss this important issue. I too have submitted a written statement for the record, and I ask that it be submitted as part of the record.

In preparing for this hearing, it allowed me some time for some self-reflection. As you pointed out, Madam Chairwoman, this is my second tour with DHS. This is the third Presidential administration that I have served with since the September 11 attack, and this is part of a 35-plus year career in law enforcement and homeland security.

I echo your and the Ranking Member's comments about the importance of this hearing and the topic we are discussing, because in those 35-plus years, I have to say, I believe that it is the most dynamic, complex, and volatile threat environment that this Nation has confronted since September 11.

While after September 11, the United States built a tremendous capability to detect and prevent attacks from persons coming to the United States from abroad, persons who had been recruited and trained and deployed by foreign terrorist organizations, many of those capacities—many of those capabilities simply do not address important elements of the threat we are facing today.

So while the U.S. Government remains concerned and very focused on preventing attacks by foreign terrorist organizations, today, the most significant terrorism threat facing the United States involves acts of targeted violence by lone offenders and small groups, in particular, those inspired by domestic extremist beliefs.

While the use of violence is not limited to a single ideological belief system, among DVEs, racially and ethnically motivated violent extremists, White-identity extremists, or White supremacist extremists remain the most persistent and lethal threat facing the homeland.

But if we are going to be effective in countering the current threat, we really have to, as Representative Pfluger pointed out, come to this from a fact-based and common understanding of the threat.

So what do I mean by that? The threat we face today primarily comes from within the United States, from individuals and small groups who self-connect with an ideological belief system, and they use those ideological beliefs to justify the use of violence as a way to express their dissatisfaction with our Nation, or with their personal situation.

For many of those who have conducted attacks, or have been disrupted and prevented from conducting attacks, their connection with these ideological beliefs comes through the consumption of racist, violent extremist, terrorism-related materials and conspiracy

theories that they find on-line through social media and other on-line platforms.

Further complicating the threat environment is that our adversaries, whether they be foreign nation-states, international extremist thought leaders, or even foreign terrorist groups like al-Qaeda in the Islamic State, they understand this, and they have devoted themselves toward understanding and leveraging the fractures in our society, so that they can also disseminate extremist rhetoric, and other false narratives in an effort to incite violence and sow discord.

So over the past several years, the United States has experienced a number of targeted attacks by angry, disaffected individuals motivated by a combination of extremist ideologies and/or personal grievances. These attacks have targeted a cross-section of our society. People in facilities have been targeted because of their faith, their political beliefs, their race, their gender, or their ethnicity.

This is a threat that is increasingly becoming international. As my colleague, Coordinator Godfrey pointed out, we are increasingly concerned about the sharing of resources and extremist rhetoric online between those in the United States and, those like-minded people abroad. We are also concerned about the use of encrypted communication technologies, the dark web, cryptocurrencies by individuals who have adopted these extremist ideologies so they can further that coordination, and do so in a way that avoids detection of law enforcement.

Further complicating and challenging law enforcement and counterterrorism officials as we seek to confront this threat is that we have to understand the close proximity between Constitutionally-protected speech and other Constitutionally-protected activities, and the threat of violence posed by individuals who use that speech, or leverage that speech as a way to incite violence.

As we address the serious and dangerous nature of the threat posed by domestic violent extremists, we must be mindful and protective of the Constitutional rights afforded all Americans. Our job is not to police thought and speech. Our job is to prevent acts of violence. This has been a major priority for the Department since January 20. We have engaged in a number of activities intended to address this threat, and I am happy to discuss those further during the questioning portion of this.

So thank you again, Madam Chairwoman. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Cohen follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JOHN COHEN

APRIL 29, 2021

Chairwoman Slotkin, Ranking Member Pfluger, and distinguished Members of the subcommittee.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to be here with you today. I appreciate you holding this important and timely hearing.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS or the Department) confronts grave challenges, both seen and unseen, on behalf of the American people. The challenges endanger our communities and our way of life, and include terrorism perpetrated by both foreign and domestic actors. Terrorist and targeted violence threats to the United States have evolved and become more varied since the attacks on September 11, 2001. Combatting terrorism and targeted violence is and will remain a top priority for DHS.



Foreign terrorist organizations (FTO) still have the intent to attack the United States within and from beyond our borders. In the years since September 11, 2001, we have enhanced our ability to identify and prevent individuals affiliated with these organizations from traveling or entering the United States. We have also enhanced security at our airports, ports of entry, and collaboration with our foreign partners to ensure that terrorists never reach our borders.

However, the most significant terrorist threat currently facing our Nation comes from lone offenders and small groups of individuals who commit acts of violence and are motivated by a broad range of violent racial or ethnic biases, political, religious, anti-Government, societal, and personal ideological beliefs and grievances—or a combination of these factors. In particular, Domestic Violent Extremism (DVE) represents the most persistent and lethal terrorism-related threat facing the United States today.

When we discuss DVE, we are talking about individuals or movements based and operating primarily within the United States who seek to further political or social goals through unlawful acts of force or violence, without direction from a foreign terrorist group or other foreign power. The mere advocacy of political or social positions, political activism, use of strong or offensive rhetoric, or generalized embrace of violent tactics does not necessarily constitute violent extremism and may be Constitutionally protected. DVEs can fit within 1 or multiple categories of ideological motivation or grievances and can span a broad range of movements.

DVE is typically fueled by violent extremist rhetoric and other grievances, including false narratives and conspiracy theories, often spread through social media and other on-line platforms by a broad range of domestic actors, and occasionally amplified by foreign threat actors, such as foreign nation-states or FTOs. DVEs exploit a variety of popular social media platforms, smaller websites with targeted audiences, and encrypted chat applications to recruit new adherents, plan and rally support for in-person actions, and disseminate materials that contribute to radicalization and mobilization to violence.

DVE lone offenders will continue to pose significant detection and disruption challenges because of their ability to mobilize discreetly and independently, and access to weapons. The lethality of this threat is evidenced by recent attacks across the United States, including against Government buildings and personnel and minority groups. Combatting this violence requires a whole-of-Government approach. As stated in last month's joint report from DHS, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence titled, *Domestic Violent Extremism Poses Heightened Threat in 2021*, the intelligence community (IC) assesses that DVEs who are motivated by a range of ideologies and galvanized by recent political and societal events in the United States pose an elevated threat to the United States in 2021. In particular, racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists (RMVEs) and militia violent extremists (MVEs) present the most lethal DVE threats, with RMVEs most likely to conduct mass-casualty attacks against civilians and MVEs typically targeting law enforcement and Government personnel and facilities.

The IC also assesses that the MVE threat increased last year, in part due to anger over COVID-19-related restrictions. The IC assessment is that this threat will almost certainly continue to be elevated throughout 2021 because of contentious sociopolitical factors that motivate MVEs to commit violence.

Additionally, RMVEs who promote the superiority of the White race are the DVE actors with the most persistent and concerning transnational connections because individuals with similar ideological beliefs exist outside of the United States. These RMVEs frequently communicate with and seek to influence each other, most often on-line. Such connectivity with overseas violent extremists might lead to a greater risk of U.S. RMVEs mobilizing to violence, including traveling to conflict zones. In many cases, these DVE actors have spent inordinate amounts of time on-line, viewing extremist, violent materials, engaging with like-minded individuals, and ultimately, in many cases, communicating their intent to commit some type of violent attack.

In many cases, these RMVEs are inspired by violent extremist narratives or conspiracy theories that are spread on-line by U.S.-based ideologues, movements, and other individuals, and occasionally by a variety of foreign adversaries. Identifying those involved in destructive, violent, and threat-related behavior is a complex challenge. For example, DVEs may filter or disguise on-line communications with vague innuendo or coded language to protect operational security, avoid violating social media platforms' terms of service, and appeal to a broader pool of potential recruits. Under the guise of First Amendment-protected activity, DVEs can recruit supporters, and incite and engage in violence. Further complicating the challenge, these

groups often migrate to private or closed social media platforms and encrypted channels to obfuscate their activity.

Attacks perpetrated by these actors have targeted a cross-section of our society, including groups targeted for their faith, ethnicity, sociocultural group or profession, as well as Government facilities and officials, law enforcement, and even Members of Congress.

Addressing this threat is a top priority for DHS and requires a multi-dimensional approach. The Department has taken a number of steps to expand our focus on this threat, working across the Federal Government, with our State and local partners, and with the private-sector and non-Government entities, and to ensure all available resources are devoted to combatting DVE. This undertaking requires nothing less than a Department-wide effort, which Secretary Mayorkas has initiated.

- Within the first 30 days of the Secretary's tenure, he designated me as the senior official, to organize, plan, and oversee the Department's operational coordination and response to all terrorism-related threats, including those from DVEs.
- On January 27, 2021, DHS issued a National Terrorism Advisory System (NTAS) Bulletin, highlighting our assessment that domestic violent extremists may be emboldened to act in the wake of the U.S. Capitol breach, and that this threat environment will persist through the near future. The NTAS, which is a public and broadly disseminated product, is a critical tool that DHS will continue to leverage to communicate with the American public and our partners.
- For the first time, DHS designated DVE as a National Priority Area within the Department's Homeland Security Grant Program. This means that in fiscal year 2021, State, local, Tribal, and territorial governments will spend at least \$77 million to prevent, prepare for, protect against, and respond to domestic violent extremism.

Further, at the direction of Secretary Mayorkas, DHS is redoubling its efforts to augment intelligence analysis and information-sharing capabilities and determine how we can better access and use publicly-available information to inform our analysis of violent extremist use of social media and other on-line platforms. The Department is also conducting a review of our posture to counter terrorist threats and targeted violence, and our priority moving forward will include expanding our attention and capabilities in the following areas:

- Intelligence and information-sharing capabilities, particularly with State, local, Tribal, and territorial partners.
- Dissemination of intelligence to the broadest audience, at the lowest classification level possible, while protecting privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties of all.
- Increased analytic focus to more comprehensively assess how violent extremist actors and other perpetrators of targeted violence exploit and leverage social media and other on-line platforms, and how those on-line activities are linked to real-world violence.
- Enhanced capabilities to conduct threat assessments and apply threat management techniques.
- Enhanced capacity for our stakeholders to implement risk mitigation measures that address the tactics, techniques, and procedures utilized by domestic violent extremists and other perpetrators of targeted violence, such as active shooter, improvised explosive devices, and vehicle ramming attacks.

The Department's Office of Intelligence and Analysis has already initiated some of these efforts through its focus on analyzing and producing products on the trends within the full spectrum of the domestic violent extremism threat landscape. Additionally, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency continues to provide resources that support community security and resilience, as well as protective measures that organizations can implement to protect facilities and venues.

We have also increased collaboration with the FBI, the IC, and the State Department to more comprehensively understand and assess the growing operational collaboration between violent extremists in the United States and those operating in Europe and other parts of the world. This increased collaboration enhances the watch-listing process, screening and vetting protocols, and travel pattern analysis to detect and assess travel by known violent extremists.

Finally, we are engaging with the tech industry, academia, and non-Governmental organizations to better understand on-line narratives associated with terrorism and targeted violence and how they are spread across the globe. We are looking to more effectively work with these partners; evaluate the emerging narratives, whether they come from an individual DVE, a domestic violent extremist movement, a foreign intelligence service, or an international terrorist organization; assess which of those narratives are most likely to incite or result in an act of terrorism or targeted violence; and work with local communities to most effectively mitigate any risks. This is where our Office for Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention plays an

important role through its provision of technical, financial, and educational assistance to establish and expand local prevention frameworks across the Nation.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before your subcommittee today, and I look forward to continuing to work with you and other Members of Congress as we address this threat. I look forward to your questions.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Great. I thank all the witnesses for their testimony. I will remind the subcommittee that we will each have 5 minutes to question the panel. When you hit close to your 5 minutes you will hear off-stage here [inaudible] reminding you to the end of the tunnel.

I will now recognize myself for some questions. So, Mr. Godfrey, as I mentioned in my opening statement, I sent that letter to Secretary Blinken. I am sure you had a hand in drafting the response, and I appreciate that. I have never, in my life, seen a letter sent to a department or agency come back before the deadline that we asked for it, so thank you for that.

You know, but the sort-of [inaudible], you know, an important limitation on your ability to designate these violent RMVEs is the ability of sufficient credible information that meets standards for designation. Speak to us a little bit about that, because, you know, my experience working in the post-9/11 era is right after 9/11, you know, while there was a handful of people who had been watching a group like al-Qaeda, there was really a full-throated effort for years to build up the architecture to prevent future terrorist attacks from al-Qaeda.

We have been incredibly successful, but it was an extreme level of effort to get to the visibility on leaders, tactics, money, organization, communication that we now enjoy for some of these groups. Can you speak more to the information and intelligence gaps that the Department has encountered on these foreign RMVEs?

Mr. GODFREY. Thank you, Madam Chair, and I am glad we got our homework in on time. That is always good to know.

Ms. SLOTKIN. It is impressive.

Mr. GODFREY. Thank you. I am happy to address your question. It is a really important one, and I think there is a lot of misunderstanding about how the designations work, and so, I am happy to take this opportunity to shed a little light on that. They are definitely a critical tool in our effort to address RMVE as they have been in our efforts against other terrorist threats down through the years.

Our counterterrorism authorities at the State Department can only be applied to foreign persons or organizations or those that are primarily—or rather can't be used to designate individuals or organizations that are predominantly based in the United States or exclusively U.S.-based. There are a couple of challenges that we frequently encounter in the RMVE arena, that includes a lack of sufficient information about these groups or actors.

Let me just unpack that a little bit. Unlike ISIS or al-Qaeda, for example, RMVE actors have a much more diffuse organizational structure. Most of these so-called organizations don't necessarily have a clear leadership or command-and-control structure, and that includes one that directs and coordinates attacks, which can be a critical element in assessing whether the activities of an individual or a group can be attributed to an organization for designation purposes.

In order to designate a group, we have to be able to demonstrate that it is engaged in terrorist activity, and that is defined as having a capacity and an intent to carry out terrorist activity. Unlike some of our foreign partners who have recently designated RMVE organizations, we are unable to designate groups based solely on hateful speech without providing an additional link to actual terrorist activity.

So, the other thing I would flag, and this is something that has already been touched on by a number of individuals already, is that many of these groups have become quite sophisticated in their use of end-to-end encrypted communications which poses challenges with respect to gathering information about their organizational structures and activities.

I think that in your discussions coming up with the intelligence community, I don't, in any way, want to speak for them, but I would anticipate that you will hear quite a lot about that—

Ms. SLOTKIN. Yes.

Mr. GODFREY [continuing]. That the increased prevalence of commercially-available encrypted technology does constitute a real challenge in this space. Thank you.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Yes, thanks for that. I will be following up sending some letters to the intelligence community asking them to put a higher priority on some of these foreign RMVEs, so that we can close some of those gaps.

You raised a good point that I want to turn to Mr. Cohen. As a Michigander, someone who enjoys, in normal, non-COVID times, constantly going back and forth over the Canadian border, or over the U.S.-Canadian border, what does it mean that Canada has taken this step to designate the Proud Boys and The Base as foreign terrorist organizations?

What specifically can our poor border agents in Windsor and Detroit expect is the new requirement, or any changes to what we do on the American side given that our closest English-speaking cousin has designated these groups?

Mr. COHEN. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman, for the question. As you are aware, our Customs and Border Protection personnel work very closely with Canada as well as other close allies, such as the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and Australia. We have extensive information-sharing relationships with them.

As it relates specifically to your question, if someone is driving from Detroit over the bridge to Windsor, it is not the Customs and Border Patrol officer that would have the first encounter with them. Their first encounter would be with Canadian authorities.

If the Canadian authorities had some reason to believe that that individual seeking entry to the country was a member of a group that had been designated as a terrorist organization under their laws, then, they could be denied entry, they could be subject to more extensive scrutiny. If that were to occur, that information would be relayed back to U.S. authorities, and, potentially, there could be further action.

Ms. SLOTKIN. I have already abused the clock. I apologize for setting a bad example, but I will come back to you on what we are now, or not, putting into our databases to flag for the Canadians,

if there has been any changes as it relates to someone being a Proud Boy or a member of The Base.

I recognize Mr. Pfluger for 5 minutes.

Mr. PFLUGER. Thank you, Madam Chair, and 5 minutes goes very quickly in this discussion.

I appreciate both witnesses' statements. I have got a couple of questions that I will get to. But let me just ask very quickly, this is the fringes of our society. I mean, if you want to put a percentage point by .00001 percent of our society who is in the business of thinking about racially motivated violence, which is inexcusable, and has no place in this society, is that true? I mean, these are the fringes, these lone actors, both Mr. Godfrey and Mr. Cohen, before I get to the real meat of my question. I think you may be on mute.

Mr. COHEN. While the numbers may not be large in comparison, we have seen, over a multi-year period, a significant number of mass casualty attacks conducted by individuals who were inspired to commit that act of violence through narratives and extremist narratives that they viewed on-line. So while, you know—so I would have to say that the level of activity by those—that fit that description is significant enough that it is considered one of the primary National security threats facing the country.

Mr. PFLUGER. So my question revolves around, you know, the use, the wedge, the people that are the state actors. How big of a threat is it that folks like China, Iran, Russia, North Korea, other state actors are using these people, these individuals who are disenfranchised and amplifying their message, driving home a message in order to, you know, to try to increase their passions to carry out violent attacks? How big of a threat is this?

Mr. COHEN. It is highly significant, because what you described is one element of a broader effort by foreign hostile powers to undermine credibility of the U.S. Government by sowing discord amongst our populous for the purposes of destabilizing our country, undermining our relationships with our key allies through the use of disinformation and other narratives that are intended to exacerbate the problems within the United States, so it is part of a broader effort.

You know, I will tell you, after the recent trial and conviction of Derek Chauvin, I was surprised to see reporting that there were narratives being spread by groups loosely affiliated with al-Qaeda, by foreign, hostile powers, and by domestic extremist thought leaders in the United States that were mirroring each other. So, there is a level of interplay, not necessarily coordination, but these hostile threat actors understand what will drive our society apart, and they are developing narratives for the purposes of doing that.

Mr. PFLUGER. Mr. Cohen, thank you.

Mr. Godfrey, can you tell us—talk to us about the partnerships that we have around the world, and what we can do better in order to get at the heart of these either state or non-state actors who would drive that wedge and sow discord in our own country.

Mr. GODFREY. Thank you very much, Congressman. Happy to address that question. I think that it is a combination of bilateral and multilateral engagement that really is the primary avenue through which we would seek to address the sort of dynamic that Mr. Cohen just identified.

Bilaterally, we work with a number of partners on things like information sharing to ensure that we are sharing a common picture of the threat. That is particularly important with partners and allies who frankly may be questioning the credibility of the United States as a partner and ally in light of the disconcerting and persistent and aggressive kinds of disinformation campaigns that Assistant Secretary Cohen referred to.

But it is also a very practical avenue through which we pass information that can help inform efforts to counter these sorts of narratives, but also, the actions of individuals who are seeking to carry out attacks and other sorts of things of that nature.

Multilaterally, I think this is a really important line of effort for us as well. It is helping create a common quorum of concern around this issue set that is really the—one of the big goals of that sort of engagement. There has been quite a lot of development recently on this front, as you can imagine. A number of our European partners and others, including Canada, New Zealand, Australia, are very focused on this threat, in part, because of some of them have experienced RMVE attacks themselves in recent years.

So just in the last week, we had the launch of 2 new initiatives, 1 under the auspices of the Global Counterterrorism Forum, that is a constellation of 30 like-minded countries that focus on elaborating best practices for addressing terrorist threats.

We are moving out quite rapidly on a set of guidelines that would provide some best practices for national governments to look at when they are elaborating their own protocols for addressing this. We have also got a line of effort under the OSCE that is ongoing, or just launching rather, that I think reflects the level of concern, particularly in Europe.

Then, finally, I would just note a somewhat more obscure but frankly really important multilateral platform that we are working with, and that is the International Institute for Justice, which is in Valletta, Malta. It is focused on developing programs and protocols to train partners from around the world. These are investigators, prosecutors, and judges who focus in the judicial realm on terrorism-related cases.

We have recently launched a RMVE-specific line of effort to help equip those practitioners with an understanding of, and tools that they will need in looking at RMVE terrorist actors when they enter courtrooms.

Ms. SLOTKIN. And——

Mr. PFLUGER. Madam Chair, may I have 30 seconds to respond?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Very quickly, because I gave you the 30 that I took. Go ahead.

Mr. PFLUGER. Thank you all for the efforts multilaterally to make sure that we protect our way of life. It is not just ours as a beacon of freedom. These are other countries who have followed the United States' lead on this. I would like to follow up, whether it is a Classified briefing or not, to look at the actual numbers of how many people in our society are being affected by this, and are being amplified by this, so that we can have a fact-based discussion and make a decision on whether or not it is the fringes of society.

With that, I yield back. Thanks for the extra time.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Thanks. I think it will be interesting in that further study to demonstrate that while lone-wolf attacks are, by far, the example of RMVE attacks in the United States, so, too, are things like al-Qaeda attacks and ISIS-affiliated attacks.

I would want to confirm this, but I believe between the attacks on synagogues and other places we have had in the couple years, dozens more Americans have been killed by RMVE attacks than al-Qaeda-associated attacks. But, Mr. Cohen, you will correct me at another time if I am wrong on that.

I now yield to Representative Langevin.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to thank our witnesses for your testimony today.

Mr. Godfrey, the mission of the State Department's Global Engagement Center is to counter foreign state and non-state propaganda in disinformation efforts. Given their efforts to understand how narratives and counter-narratives work in societies, and to work with the tech sector to develop tools and methods to fight false narratives, what is the role of the GEC, the Global Engagement Center, in State Department efforts against racially and ethnically motivated violent extremist groups?

Mr. COHEN. Thank you, Congressman. You are right that the Global Engagement Center has, exactly as you said, the mandates to both track and also counter state and non-state disinformation efforts. That is something that initially came out of, as you know, the focus on Islamist terrorists, al-Qaeda, ISIS, and the like. But certainly, it encompasses, as all of our counterterrorism tools here at the Department of State do, all brands, or types of terrorism, so those tools are ideologically neutral and they get applied in that way.

I think one of the things that is vitally important that both the GEC and the Bureau of Counterterrorism do, often in tandem, is to engage the tech sector directly on the nature of these threats, and we do that for a couple of purposes. One is to ensure, particularly for smaller platform providers that may lack the resources of some of the larger tech companies that have big Government services offices, to ensure awareness of what the threat is, what it looks like, and the specific ways in which some of these actors are exploiting platforms for malign purposes.

The second part, as I alluded to earlier in my statement, is to encourage those companies to elaborate, and then rigorously enforce terms of service. So to make them responsible, frankly, or to assume voluntarily the responsibility for ensuring that their platforms aren't exploited by these actors.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Thank you. Mr. Cohen, you have mentioned that the Department of Homeland Security has increased collaboration with partner organizations to more comprehensively understand the collaboration between violent extremists in the United States and their counterparts abroad. So, what are the operational implications of determining that a domestic violent extremist group or individual has interacted with a foreign RMVE group? Does this change depending on whether or not the foreign group has a terrorist designation?

Mr. COHEN. Absolutely, Congressman. Thank you for that question. One area where it could impact Departmental operation is the

more knowledge that we acquire from the intelligence community through our communications with foreign law enforcement and border control authorities, more information that we learn about the travel patterns of extremists abroad operating abroad, the more we can learn about where their training facilities are located. We can apply that information to the travel pattern analysis and screening and vetting protocols that we have used for years to protect against foreign terrorists from entering the United States. So that is one area.

Secondarily, if there are groups that are designated as terrorist organizations abroad, and we can identify individuals in this country who are engaged in activities to support those groups or collaborate with those groups, that broadens the types of investigative and watch listing authority—steps that we can take.

Mr. LANGEVIN. What kind of information-sharing activities occur, though, between U.S. agencies and their international partners in these situations?

Mr. COHEN. Well, there is an increasing conversation, and to Chairwoman Slotkin's earlier question about Canadian authorities, we share some limited watch listing information regarding foreign terrorists, or people under investigation for terrorism-related charges with Canadian authorities. We receive information from Canadian authorities about individuals who may be associated with extremist organizations abroad who enter Canada, and may be entering Canada for the purposes of trying to enter the United States much.

There have been examples where individuals who entered Canada who were in—where there was information that they were associated with violent extremist organizations, they sought to enter the United States and they were restricted from entering the United States because of that information sharing.

Mr. LANGEVIN. OK. Very good. My time is expired. Thank you for your answers, and I yield back.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Thank you.

I recognize Mr. Meijer.

Mr. MEIJER. Thank you, Madam Chair and Ranking Member, and to our distinguished guests who are here today. I know I have had a chance to speak with Mr. Cohen and just appreciate these continuing and kind-of following discussions.

I want to try to bridge a little bit of a gap between, you know, some of the incidents we have seen in the United States, which definitely have—there was the Tree of Life Synagogue attack—which have had a, you know, RMVE motivation, but aren't connected to kind of broader groups, and then the discussion of the broader, you know, potentially FTO designations or specially designated—or special designations we are looking at through State Department channels.

Is the broader concern that the pool of dissatisfaction, the discontents, the socially alienated within the United States, that that is sort-of a swamp, a fertile breeding ground for the international entities to try to take advantage of in order to establish more of a beachhead, or is the concern more that those international groups could be resources for individuals who are motivated within the United States but aren't yet part of a group? I guess, can you kind-



of break out, how are you viewing that linkage and that ultimate threat?

Mr. COHEN. So it is a little bit of both. You know, over the past several years, we have seen a number of attacks in the United States that were conducted by individuals, and we can draw direct correlation between their attack and extremist narratives that were promoted by individuals abroad.

Coordinator Godfrey referenced the Christchurch attack. We know that that attack, or in addition to live-streaming his attack also posted a document relating to his belief systems on-line. We know that that document was viewed by individuals in the United States who subsequently used the narrative in that to justify their conducting attacks within the United States.

So that is one area we are very concerned about, the sharing of ideas, the dissemination of extremist rhetoric and materials, the posting of live-streaming videos of acts of violence. That all is—we have found acts of violence in this country that were informed by the attacker consuming that material on-line.

But as you also pointed out, there are increasing concerns within the Department of Homeland Security that we are seeing groups of individuals who hold extremist beliefs, not only just communicating with like-minded people abroad, but traveling to meet with people abroad, perhaps working together to acquire resources through crowdsourcing or fundraising may engage in the sharing of strategies.

We were tracking some on-line narratives during a recent period where we were seeing postings by individuals abroad who are seeking to travel to the United States to join planned gatherings and protests by extremist organizations.

So, it is a little bit of both. We are concerned about how that can feed the threat environment domestically, the rhetoric that is being posted on-line intentionally; and then, secondarily, we are concerned about individuals in this country, or groups in this country, collaborating operationally with individuals abroad.

Mr. MEIJER. Yes. Obviously, the strategy for mitigating, you know, the individual versus the strategy for combating the group is going to be very different. I know when we spoke it was—and this is a conversation I have had with our local law enforcement as well. In Michigan, you know, we were—our law enforcement was clued in to the attempted kidnapping plot against the Governor through one of the participants who grew uneasy at the prospect of some of the targeting of law enforcement that was occurring, and so then became a confidential informant and helped bring—expose that plot and ensure that it was prevented from occurring.

So how—I guess, we are kind-of drilling from that that international, almost terrorist mastermind, you know, organized notion to all the way down to that individual preemption and how do we identify somebody who may be susceptible? As we have seen, and then I think we have talked about this within some of our Islamic communities as well, that idea of trying to have some intervention before somebody tilts to the point where they may be susceptible to the rhetoric, but how do we get someone off that edge before they go full bore down a violent path. Can you also speak to that more local level engagement, interaction?

Mr. COHEN. Yes.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Very briefly. Very briefly, please.

Mr. COHEN. Absolutely, Congressman. A big part of our strategy focuses on how we complement the work of a JTTF, for example, to build community-based violence prevention programs. There are times when someone may come to the attention of law enforcement. They don't meet the threshold required for a counterterrorism investigation, but the concern is that person poses a high risk of violence.

We are working with local communities around the country to develop programs and approaches that focus on reducing the risk posed by those individuals who are exhibiting those warning signs.

Mr. MEIJER. Madam Chair, I yield back.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Thank you. I would just note to Representative Meijer, you know, certainly part of my interest in looking at these RMVE groups abroad is that should they be designated as foreign terrorist organizations, it opens up a potential charge of material support to terrorism here in the United States for those individuals who are supporting those groups. We have that charge for groups like ISIS and al-Qaeda and many, many others, and I just, you know, think we should put the same RMVE groups through that same process to see what happens, to see if they make threshold on those.

I recognize Ms. Jackson Lee for 5 minutes. I think you are still on mute, ma'am. There we go.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. I am unmuted now. Thank you so very much.

Let me—first, good morning. Thank you for this hearing, to the Chairwoman and the Ranking Member, and to the witnesses that are here this morning. Racially and ethnically motivated violent extremism, the RMVE groups, I think that the United States has lagged behind, and I am grateful for the 2 witnesses.

Madam Chair, I am grateful for a response of a letter before the deadline. I think we are moving in the right direction. But the Government, over the years, has seemingly lagged in addressing the transnational threat from RMVE actors, especially when it comes to designating RMVE organizations and individuals with international ties as foreign terrorist organizations, or specially-designated global terrorists.

I would venture to say, 3 years ago, most Americans were not aware of the Oath Takers, the Proud Boys, the Boogaloo Bois. Those of us on Homeland Security obviously were engaging with those names, but when you would speak in public, most people would have a very glazed look, but they have been here and they are circulating.

Last evening, the President, rightly so, got a group of bipartisan Members inside the Chamber to get a standing ovation to law enforcement, to the police officers, to individuals who put their life on the line for us. On January 6, we saw the extended organizations—I think there are other layers of such—literally take the American flag and beat the symbol of law enforcement at the citadel of democracy near to their death. We obviously lost officers in the midst of this battle.

So, I want to raise these questions about thought and about the idea that as the investigation proceeds, there is the question of the

elements of law enforcement that might have been engaged, the elements of the military that might be engaged. I would be interested in your assessment of the size of that, how we should respond to that, whether there is an international connection to that.

I would also indicate that—the second part of my question is, we are beginning to heal the Nation, heal the Nation with legislation. I know you have heard the name George Floyd Justice in Policing Act, which many of our Members have supported, and legislation to repair the history of slavery in this country, H.R. 40.

I wonder if the work of Congress, because we are opinion-setters, we are looked to as leaders, contribute to the formulation or the extensiveness of the growth. When I say Congress, what I am saying is, the body politic. Are these groups responding directly to their sense of the political arena, and they are not in the arena, they are on the outside of the arena, and how that continues to grow them? So, I would like to start with Mr. Cohen and then Mr. Godfrey. Mr. Cohen.

Mr. COHEN. So, Congresswoman, it is nice to see you again, and thank you for the question.

On your first question about your concerns about military and law enforcement personnel, as you know, Congresswoman, I was a police officer for a number of years in California. I worked closely under Mayor Lee Brown in Houston to work on issues pertaining to policing. It is a career that I am very proud—a profession I am very proud to have been a part of.

I share your concern. Police officers, members of the military are susceptible to being influenced by on-line conspiracy theories and narratives like anybody else. It is important—and I know I have spoken with a number of police chiefs, and one of the issues that we are focused on within the Department and the Federal Government broadly is to ensure that we have an understanding of whether those narratives are influencing not only the beliefs, but the behavior of the men and women who either serve in the military or in law enforcement.

In conversations I have had with our civil liberties and civil rights officer at the Department, you know, we are not just there to enforce the law. We are there to enforce the Constitution as well, protect the Constitution. As law enforcement and security officials, we have a responsibility to ensure that we can do that credibly.

To your other question, I have to say, it was very poignant. As you know, I was one of the individuals in the Obama administration that helped design the Countering Violent Extremism program. I have to tell you, as I look back it, we had—there were some flaws in our assumptions. I think we underestimated the amount of distrust that existed between some communities of color, immigrant communities, and in particular, the Arab-American and Muslim communities in the United States, and we underestimated how that distrust was going to impact our ability to address this problem.

So a big part of our effort today is working to regain that trust, and we are doing that at a time where, quite frankly, it is challenging. The debate on criminal justice reform that is going on across the country, which is a needed debate, and a needed discussion, you know, comes at a time where we are dealing with an

angry and polarized public, and it comes at a time where we are dealing with significant instances of mass casualty attacks by people who are being influenced by narratives, and we are dealing with it at a time when our foreign adversaries, in particular, are using the protests and the debate over racial justice to trash our society.

Ms. SLOTKIN. We will have to leave it there. Thank you.

The Chair recognizes Congressman Guest.

Mr. GUEST. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Gentlemen, I want to thank each of you-all for spending some time with us today to talk about this very important issue.

Mr. Godfrey, I want to talk to you very briefly. You talk in your report—and I think that this may have been clear, has been made clear throughout this hearing—that this is not just an issue that the United States is dealing with, that this is actually an international issue. You talk about attacks that have occurred in Canada, France, Germany, New Zealand. You referenced in your report a recent arrest in Singapore. You talk about the fact that these actors are part of a globally, interconnected on-line community and that they use that as a way in which to fundraise, to organize, to plot attacks.

If you will, you talk a little bit about the organizational structure. I would just ask if you might expand on that. Talk about the organizational structures for the RMVEs and how they contrast with other terrorist organizations such as ISIS and al-Qaeda?

Mr. GODFREY. I am so sorry. Are you hearing distortion on that end?

Mr. GUEST. No, sir. I hear you clearly.

Mr. GODFREY. OK. Super. I am so sorry. I just got some feedback here, but I will drive on.

So there are some, I think, ways in which RMVE actors or groups compare organizationally to other terrorist threats that we have been dealing with, including groups like ISIS and al-Qaeda. You, Congressman, very artfully mentioned a number of those that is principally using on-line fora to radicalize, recruit, fundraise, and to, some extent, organize.

I think one of the principle differences is that the RMVE groups tend to be much less hierarchical, both in terms of having an identified leader, but also, individuals who then are responsible for organizing and conducting operations.

There is a lot of focus in RMVE groups on rhetoric and here I would circle back to one of the previous questions and say that a lot of what we see in terms of the interplay between these groups is inspirational versus organizational. I don't want to underestimate the degree to which some of these actors are looking to collaborate on things like how to organize training camps or even move people and material illicitly, but a lot of what we see is really focused on the rhetoric and this mutually, self-reinforcing echo chamber is one way to look at it.

To that end, they, I think—or to that point, and to the question from Congresswoman Jackson Lee, I think that that has tended to amplify and reinforce some of that sense of alienation and grievance that these groups are able to adroitly capitalize on.

Mr. GUEST. Let me—let me just kind-of build on that. You also talk, and I think actually in the same part of your report, about the funding of these groups, and you say some are self-funded. Some raise funds from various—both legal and illegal sources. Can you talk a little and expand on that just a little bit about what you are seeing as the different funding sources for the groups that we are talking about today?

Mr. GODFREY. Absolutely, Congressman.

I think RMVE actors do raise money from a variety of sources; including merchandise and music sales; donations from individuals; criminal activity, such as narcotic and weapons trafficking; selling counterfeit goods turns out to be something they do quite a lot of as well.

Then, finally, providing military-style training to other extremists. All of those constitute revenue streams for some of these groups. As with any sort of range of actors, they are not homogenous. There is some variation as to who kind-of focuses more on what within that realm.

I think one other important thing that I would emphasize is that by contrast with groups like al-Qaeda and ISIS, which often rely on informal financial institutions and networks, RMVE groups often use financial institutions, formal ones, such as banks and monetary transmitters to move funds both domestically and internationally. Several of these groups, these RMVE groups, are also known to use crowdfunding platforms and virtual currency to both solicit donations, but also to effect transfers of funds.

Mr. GUEST. Thank you.

Madam Chairman, I believe my time is up.

At this time I will yield back.

Ms. SLOTKIN. OK. We could have given you a few extra seconds there, but got it and we will probably move to a second round here in a second.

But in the mean time, I recognize Mr. Malinowski from New Jersey.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thanks to the witnesses. I think this is an incredibly interesting discussion and an important issue.

I very strongly agree with you. It is vital to call things by their name. I think it is really interesting, by the way, to highlight that these people, these fringe extremists in our country who see themselves as nationalists, are actually internationalists, who see themselves as kind-of extreme, America-first patriots, are actually, in many cases, receiving funding and support from abroad, and that is important to expose.

I think the word “terrorism” is an appropriate one to use in this context. It is a very powerful word in our effort to discredit these people and what they do and the threat that they pose. But where I—where things get much more complicated, of course, is whether the legal designation of terrorists or terrorist group is appropriate. It would certainly be useful. It is an incredibly powerful thing to designate an organization as an FTO. It enables, it gives us extraordinary powers to deal not just with acts of terrorism after they have been committed, but, as Chairwoman Slotkin mentioned, to

criminalize material support, really, to criminalize membership or association with a group.

But, of course, with great power comes great responsibility, and we know that governments have sometimes abused the extraordinary powers that these kinds of designations give them.

So as we examine that—and we do need to examine the question of whether some of these internationally-active groups should be designated—I wanted to ask the witnesses about other potential tools in the tool kit.

So, for example, we have wide-ranging financial sanctions authorities that enable—that we use in the counterterrorism context, the human rights context, in all kinds of National security-related situations.

Take a group like, say, the Asov brigades in Ukraine, or the Nordic Resistance Movement, just to name 2 groups that are of great concern to us. It may be difficult, even if we wanted to do it, to officially label them as foreign terrorist organizations, because you have to show that they have committed acts of terrorism.

Should we consider, and if so, do we have the authority under current law to use financial sanctions authorities, SDN listings, against a group that, say, advocates violence openly, that advocates race war, that conducts military-style training of people who come to them to learn, you know, explosives and small arms tactics, none of which may be enough to get them an FTO designations, but which are dangerous things? Is that something that could be considered? Again, do we have the legal authorities?

For either of you.

Mr. GODFREY. Congressman, thank you for the thoughtful question. I am happy to take an initial stab at this, and I expect that Assistant Secretary Cohen may have thoughts as well.

I think you have hit on a really important distinction, and that is that between foreign terrorist organization designations and those of specially designated global terrorists. Those are different authorities. We have really had a really important development with respect to the latter, the so-called SDGT authorities. In late 2019, when those authorities were broadened under E.O. 13224 to allow us to designate individuals who were either determined to be leaders of organizations or who directed and conducted training for individuals that were parts of those organization, and that, in fact, those 2 prongs were the way that we were able to do the designation of the Russian Imperil Movement in April 2020.

We are very proactively looking at using those authorities against other RMVE actors. We are close in a couple of cases. I don't want to go into too much in this forum about the details, but those challenges I highlighted generically at the top with respect to using the designations' authorities are relevant here, and that is that we often have part of the picture of a group and its structure and the activities of some of its individuals, but making sure that we have the picture that meets the legal sufficiency standards can be quite difficult, given the need to have, in some cases, very specific information.

Ms. SLOTKIN. OK. I know that Mr. Malinowski's time is up, and we will enter a second round of questions here and I will keep peo-

ple to time so that we can get through the second round and maybe we can follow up.

I will recognize myself.

Mr. Cohen, just to finish up the question I had at the beginning about Canada, so I understand that, you know, Canada—if an individual, right, as someone who represents many people who subscribe and consider themselves Proud Boys, for instance, that is a popular thing, a popular group in Michigan. If they were to travel across the bridge or tunnel to go to Windsor, Canada, I hear you that it would be the Canadian Customs officials who would look their name up, see if they are any watch lists that we share with them, and then make a distinction.

I guess my question is: In terms of the inputting of data into those watch lists, has anything changed since Canada designated the Proud Boys, and The Base terrorist organizations from the American inputting of that data?

Mr. COHEN. So as it currently stands, inputting data into a—into the terrorist watch list would be done by the FBI. It would have to have reached a threshold of reasonable suspicion. It would be based on investigations, and under some circumstances, not on a regular basis, but on some circumstances, that information could be made available to Canadian authorities proactively.

So, for example, if I am conducting an investigation into an individual, and I become aware that that individual, who is being investigated for violent activity, is traveling to Canada, Canada then may be provided prior notification so investigative activities could take place.

But from a Government—as a Government perspective, we are not trolling through the internet, trying to find people who say they are associated with Proud Boys or posting pictures of themselves, wearing Proud Boys garb, and providing that information to the Canadians. We don't do that anyway. Currently, I am told that it would be under—that that information that is purely related to a domestic—domestic terrorism situation with no nexus to a foreign government is not regularly shared.

Ms. SLOTKIN. OK. Thank you for that clarification.

Mr. Godfrey, you know, in this attempt to get more intelligence and information and data on these RMVEs abroad, can you tell me what the State Department has already done to try and increase what we know about these groups? I mean, we know embassies across the world were not thinking about al-Qaeda before 9/11. They were not thinking about ISIS before they took over Iraq and Syria, and only with guidance did they start to really collect and ask about those things. Can you tell me what the State Department has or has not done on this issue?

Mr. GODFREY. Absolutely. Thank you very much, Madam Chair, for the question.

On March 19, we sent a cable to all our diplomatic and consular posts, asking them to engage with their host governments regarding individuals or groups affiliated with RMVE, and particularly those with White identity terrorism ties, and to share that information back in formal reporting about RMVE networks and activities in their countries.

To date, we have received responses from 64 posts globally, and are expecting additional responses in the weeks ahead. Some of those have been a little bit slow by the combination of COVID and Ramadan, respectively, but we are making some pretty good progress. I don't want to get into specifics about what individual posts said, because we do need to protect the correspondence with our partner governments, but I do want to talk about a couple of trends that were highlighted.

I can say that in Europe, there was particular, or there was the greatest concern that was expressed about the RMVE threat, including particularly transnational linkages, and a number of European governments noted they were seeing RMVE as a growing counterterrorism priority. They assessed that RMVE lone actors posed a greater threat than RMVE organizations that were publicly known to them. They also noted that in a number of countries in Europe, RMVE actors have been specifically encouraged to join the military or law enforcement to gain tactical experience that could subsequently be used in targeting their perceived enemies.

In terms of funding, there was a common thread of donations and solicitations on-line, as well as the sales of apparel, music, and literature. Then, I would also note that some of the governments that we have talked with are encountering many of the same challenges that we have talked about here today, in terms of countering the threat and that lack of hierarchical structure and a central command, and the use of secure communication techniques and platforms has really complicated efforts to get after the threat.

Then, finally, a number of posts noted that their host government interlocutors had emphasized that RMVE actors have increasingly been moving to smaller, newer, lesser-known, and more fully encrypted platforms for communication in an effort to escape Government scrutiny.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Great. Thank you for that. Very helpful.

The Chair recognizes Representative Pfluger.

Mr. PFLUGER. Thank you, Madam Chair. I have several questions for both witnesses, or either witness.

Which country non-state actor, state actor, presents the biggest threat right now to sowing discord to using these actors in the United States to amplify this threat?

Mr. COHEN. We—

Mr. GODFREY. Go ahead, John.

Mr. COHEN. I was going say from the Department of Homeland Security perspective, we have been concerned and have monitored intelligence community reporting on efforts by Russia and Iran in particular.

Mr. PFLUGER. Mr. Godfrey.

Oh, you are on mute.

Mr. GODFREY. Apologies.

We would share that assessment, Congressman.

Mr. PFLUGER. OK. Very good. That is very helpful, and I think we want to continue to dig into that.

My second question is, you know, when it comes to the designations, I think this is a fascinating discussion. I appreciate Mr. Malinowski's comments on it. You know, what are the unintended consequences that you believe when it comes to our First Amend-



ment rights, protected rights, that if we do move toward designating and explore this, could happen? I mean, where are the dangers in this?

Mr. GODFREY. Congressman, could I ask, are we—when you mention designations, are we talking about foreign entities or domestic entities, or both, perhaps?

Mr. PFLUGER. Well, for anyone in the United States who is—who is working with transnational groups, let's say that Iran and Russia are able to get to them and then they have the organizations through other, you know, European countries, for instance, you know, if we move toward designating, what First Amendment rights are we, you know, likely to either breach, or have as an unintended consequence that makes it, you know, very difficult and blurring of the lines?

Mr. GODFREY. So just speaking for the State Department—and I will defer to Assistant Secretary Cohen, perhaps, on the domestic piece—I think we would only have—envision a situation in which we could use our authorities to designate actors abroad. There would have to be a change in the scope of our authorities to enable us to contemplate designating individuals here at home, and I don't know if Assistant Secretary Cohen might have something further he wants to add.

Mr. COHEN. No. I would just add simply that, Congressman, you are hitting on one of the central challenges in dealing with this threat which is being able to distinguish between protected speech, Constitutionally-protected speech, and actions that relate to a specific threat or the threat of violence in particular.

So for us, for the Department, or for law enforcement to take action against an individual, we have to have information that says, that reflects behavior beyond simply posting racist or extremist narratives on-line. We would have to see activity that relates that belief system to the potential threat of violence.

Mr. PFLUGER. When it comes to—thank you both for that. I mean, it is a very difficult and complex issue here. When it comes to the work, the coordination, the information sharing, intelligence sharing, and how our JTTF is working, what authorities do we not have right now that would help us identify, detect, and, you know, maybe even intervene at times?

Mr. COHEN. So that is a very interesting question, Congressman, and it goes to the question that Congressman Meijer brought up. A number of the circumstances that we have experienced over the year have been effective—over the past several years, have been effectively disrupted by the investigations of a JTTF. But we have also seen situations in which an individual has come to the attention of law enforcement authorities. They didn't meet the definitional thresholds that would warrant a terrorism or counterterrorism investigation, but they were still deemed to be a significant risk, and, in some cases, have even gone out and committed an act of violence.

So in conjunction to the activities of the JTTF which, again, have been highly effective and are an important part of dealing with this threat, we have to look at other activities that can take place within the community, whether it is the conduct of a threat assessment investigation that assesses the risk posed by an individual and the

employment of different types of threat management strategies, whether it be mental health support, whether it be working with the family of an individual who is exhibiting these behaviors, whether it is some other type of law enforcement action or the imposition of a flag law that restricts their access to a firearm, there is a number of things that we can—that can be done at the local level by local authorities and community members that can reduce the risk posed by an individual who is exhibiting the warning sign.

So that is a big area of emphasis for us at the Department, is that we have adjusted our grant program language and, you know, just so that we can support those types of activity at the local level.

Mr. PFLUGER. Thank you, Mr. Cohen. Thank you, Mr. Godfrey. I yield back.

Mr. COHEN. I heard the clicker, Madam Chairwoman.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Thank you. I am trying. It is the virtual world.

The Chair recognizes Representative Gottheimer.

Mr. GOTTHEIMER. Thank you, Chairwoman Slotkin, for holding this very important and timely hearing.

As FBI Director Wray recently testified before Congress, the top threat we face from domestic violent extremists continues to be those we identify as racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists, specifically those who advocate for the superiority of the White race and who are the primary source of ideologically-motivated lethal incidents of violence in 2018 and 2019.

Assistant Secretary Cohen, can you please discuss how U.S.-based White supremacists and other domestic extremists have increasingly adopted the tactics of foreign terrorist organizations, and how DHS is working to address the threat?

Mr. COHEN. Thank you for that question, Congressman.

So the Department—Secretary Mayorkas instructed my office to conduct an operational review of the Department, which is ongoing, and it seeks to answer a very specific question, which is: Based on the current state of the threat, are we doing all that we can to address the threat posed by domestic violent extremists? Areas that we are focusing on, what more can we do to address the use of on-line platforms by foreign and domestic threat actors who seek to incite violence? What more can we do to increase literacy amongst our young people, and individuals who may be potentially influenced by those on-line narratives?

What more can we do from the perspective of training? Should we be increasing our presence on Joint Terrorism Task Forces? How do we better leverage the watch-listing authorities and travel pattern analysis capabilities of CBT and TSA in order to identify violent extremists who may be preparing to travel domestically and internationally?

Those are some of the issues we are working on, but I look forward to briefing the committee more fully at the completion of the review.

Mr. GOTTHEIMER. Thank you.

I don't know, Mr. Cohen, if I can—if you are able to answer this, given the on-going review, but I have been very focused on the social media aspect of foreign and domestic extremists for radicalization and recruitment. Are there ways that you can talk about of how we can more effectively identify and prevent the on-

line spread of despicable ideologies that we know encourage people to engage in lethal violence?

Mr. COHEN. That is a great question. I share your concerns. I think this is one of the driving forces behind the current threat. One of the things that we are looking at intently at the Department is what more can we do to identify emerging narratives as early as possible, and assess the—whether those narratives are likely to influence acts of violence, and how fast they are spreading across multiple platforms. Once we are able to do that, we will be able to anticipate potential target areas. We can work with our partners at the Federal level and at the State and local level to reduce the risk to those targets.

A good example of that is what we experienced in Washington, DC between January 6 and January 20 where, after the January 6 incident, we continued to see reflections on-line that people were intending to come back on the 20th to engage in violence. So we were able to take steps to mitigate the risks through more visible security and other measures.

So, that is the type of work that we are looking at. We are working closely with the tech industry and non-Government entities to learn from them, to see how they are identifying toxicity in residents of narratives on-line.

Mr. GOTTHEIMER. Thank you so much.

As you know, the Foreign Terrorist Organization designation was first used in 1997. Today, nearly 25 years later, the terrorism landscape looks very different. Increasingly, you see White supremacist extremists spreading their ideologies and distributing guidance and encouragement for independent actors outside of established groups or channels.

Acting Coordinator Godfrey, is our current designation and sanctions reviewing sufficient, in your opinion, for combating diffuse, leaderless, or amorphous racially and actively motivated violent extremists, threats? How do we better target these types of actors?

Mr. GODFREY. Thank you, Congressman.

I think that, as I have mentioned a couple of times, the authorities that we currently have, which are very much focused on international actors, have demonstrated themselves down through the years to be quite effective. I am not sure it is so much a question of the authorities themselves as the information that underpins getting to a legal sufficiency standard that is required to take those designation actions that is the real challenge for us with respect to these groups which, as you said, are different from some of the kinds of terrorist groups that we have dealt with down through the years.

Mr. GOTTHEIMER. Thank you so much.

I yield back.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Thank you.

The Chair recognizes Mr. Meijer from Michigan.

Mr. MEIJER. Thank you, Madam Chair.

You know, I appreciated the discussion and, Madam Chair, we have also kind-of discussed on other channels, kind-of, how we strike that right balance between protecting civil liberties, and making sure that we are adequately preparing our law enforcement for the task and, indeed, I think that is the overall intent of this

subcommittee hearing today as we are looking at what those higher-level distinctions would be.

I guess one request—and then I will go into some more remarks—is I know there was a reference to, in one of the documents, to a Classified annex, or kind-of more fulsome report on this issue.

Would love to speak, or have an opportunity for the committee as a whole to dive a little bit more deeply, because I know especially, as we are on the Homeland Security Committee but we are tying into international entities as well. So would love to get the fuller picture.

Then, I am well aware, Madam Chair, as well, that you had reached out to the DNI's office to try to get some more information and have them participate. But, you know, as we are looking down and assessing between some of the neo-Nazi elements, like Atomwaffen, versus those who don't fall into as need a description, understanding that overall threat profile on a specific level would be appreciated.

Now, I guess, getting back to some of our panelists here today, we have that distinction or that—I guess, I would love to dig a little bit more deeper into the balance of what we have seen from propaganda, or misinformation, that has been amplified by foreign governments, especially malign foreign governments, with an intent toward the recruitment, or the populating of that misinformation ecosphere for domestic consumption, versus where have foreign governments—I guess here is the question: Have we seen foreign governments that have been actively using organizations that could potentially be designated FTOs? Have we seen foreign governments actively using them in order to recruit or bolster membership domestically?

I guess more likely for Mr. Cohen.

Mr. COHEN. Congressman, thank you for the question.

That is probably an issue we would have to discuss in a closed session, to address it completely.

Mr. MELJER. I guess just stepping a little bit back, have we seen foreign governmental influence been more on supporting organizations that may seek to recruit, or on amplifying information that gets consumed in a non-organizational setting on an individual basis?

Mr. COHEN. So without touching the first part of your question, what we have seen are examples where a foreign hostile power will, you know, will watch what is going on in this country, and then they will use events. Some topics that they have focused on in the past have been—have been issues relating to immigration, race—immigrant—I am sorry—issues relating to discussions on race and issues discussed—regarding, you know, terrorism, enforcement of terrorism, you know, addressing terrorism threats. They have used issues like that to try to sow discord amongst our populace. They know these are issues that are passionately being debated, and they will use narratives on both sides of the issue for the purposes of inflaming the discussion.

As I mentioned earlier, I was—it was really intriguing to me to see common—after the conviction was announced of Derek Chauvin in Minneapolis, it was really interesting to see that we saw com-

mon language being used, for example, focusing on whether the jury had been unfairly influenced to make the—to come up with the verdict they came up with. We saw that on forums known—associated with Russia, forums associated with Iran, as well as domestic extremists.

Mr. MELJER. Thank you, Mr. Cohen. I am just running a little low on time. I wanted to get one last question in real quick.

I know we have talked about how an FTO designation may bolster law enforcement. Would an FTO designation also bolster our ability to combat that international, or that foreign state nexus, or that foreign state support for a RMVE internationally?

Mr. GODFREY. That would depend on the individual group and the nature of the proxy relationship between a foreign state actor and that group, as to the extent to which an FTO designation could have an impact. Without going into too much in this forum, I would say that there are some instances in which that could, in fact, have an impact.

Mr. MELJER. OK. Thank you, Madam Chair.

I yield back.

Ms. SLOTKIN. No problem. I think absolutely we can certainly have a discussion about a Classified session, going into some of these details. I would also suggest that any Member who is interested ask the Homeland staff to pull the Classified kind of production that has gone on the past couple of months on these groups, or on whatever issue you are interested in. They will pull that. You can sit in a room and read it. I do it pretty frequently. While the collection is not great, right, I don't want anyone to think that there is incredibly detailed information, it is certainly an interesting read file to pull.

So, the Chair recognizes Representative Jackson Lee from Texas.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Thank you, Madam Chair.

I cannot see the clock, and, so, I really lost out in terms of trying to get my questions in. I appreciate Mr. Cohen gave a very thorough answer, but forgive me. I just cannot see the clock, and it makes it very difficult to get your questions in. So I will do my very best. This is a very important topic.

I have, in my opening statement, about 4 pages of terroristic acts, beginning with April 15, 2013, the Boston attacks during the Boston Marathon, individuals here in the United States. One could argue that there was an international issue, but domestic terrorism. Two, the 2 individuals in Dallas in 2016, ex-military who shot and killed 5 police officers, and an offender in Louisiana that killed 6 police officers in Baton Rouge.

I say that because my last question finished on police officer involvement. These individuals were allegedly with sovereign nation. We haven't mentioned them. I would like to get a comment about that, Mr. Cohen, if I could get it very briefly. I want to make sure that I didn't end on the note that all of the military and all police officers are involved with the Boogaloo Bois and the Proud Boys and the Oath Takers. I wanted to suggest that there was a minute group that we needed to assess, and I wanted to kind-of get an understanding of how Homeland Security was doing that.

I would be interested, if you want to comment on the sovereign nation, if you can do that very briefly so that I can raise questions with Mr. Godfrey as well.

Mr. Cohen.

Mr. COHEN. Yes, Congressman. Sovereign citizens believe that the current Government of the United States is illegal and they have no responsibility to obey the laws or defer to authority figures, such as local police, and there have been a number of instances where they have engaged in lethal encounters, killing police officers.

I agree with you that the overwhelming majority of law enforcement officials around this country go out every day to protect the Nation. There are a small group that may be susceptible to being influenced, and we have a responsibility to make sure that we counteract that.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Right. So what I want to say—so what I want to make the point is, you are not excluding or precluding your work to ensure that in those ranks, you don't have—I know the military is being assessed by the Secretary of Defense, but I just want to make sure that you are looking at those groups as well, so we weed them out from the larger body. Is that correct?

Mr. COHEN. Yes. We just initiated a major effort across the Department to do that.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Very good. Thank you.

Let me ask—and I think this question was asked but I just want to make sure. Mr. Godfrey, in terms of the numbers of those domestic terrorists going internationally to join wars, we are familiar with the Ukraine War that some of our terrorists from here were going to refine their skills. How extensive is that?

Mr. GODFREY. Thank you very much, Congresswoman. It is nice to see you again. I think the last time we crossed past was in Riyadh.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Thank you.

Mr. GODFREY. To your question, the number—and this will echo what Assistant Secretary Cohen mentioned earlier—the numbers are not terribly large. The concern we have is that the impact of those individuals traveling and acquiring skills in war zones is disproportionate, such that when they return, they have skill—they typically come back more radicalized than when they left would be one point to make, and the other would be that they do have hard skills that they are able to, in some cases, use in attacking targets domestically.

One final note. One of the things we are hearing increasingly in diplomatic channels that I think would be interesting for the Members of the committee to know is increased concern from partners abroad about the U.S. racially and ethnically motivated violent extremists cohort being an exporter of—a net exporter of ideology and pernicious thought. There is often the perception that American actors at home, RMVE actors, White and terrorist actors, are more influenced by foreign actors than the other way around. What we are increasingly seeing evidence of is concern about the flow going the other way.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. If you could just finish quickly, again, I had asked the question earlier in the first round about the actions of

legislation or comments by Members which I wanted to finish the point. I think it is important for us to show our ability to debate issues like policing bills, the Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals, which may be sounding differently in some ears, but it really is important for the Congress to be able to show a democratic debate so that it doesn't fuel the fires of those who feel that they are on the outside, or want to attack elected officials.

Can someone just take a quick stab at that? The voices that come out of Government, does that fuel the fires if we don't do it in a civil and engaging manner, showing how democracy really works?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Very quickly, please.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. COHEN. Absolutely.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Is that Mr. Cohen.

Mr. COHEN. That was—yes, yes Congressman. The—the people—we have seen attacks in which people have derived inspiration or justification for the use of violence based on on-line narratives, but also based on the words of public officials and individuals who work in the media.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Well, we will try to do better. I think that is very important.

Thank you, Madam Chair. There is a lot of work that we have to do. Thank you.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Thank you.

For our final question, the Chair recognizes Representative Malinowski.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Just, first, a brief note on the unintended consequences question that I think all of us, you know, have in the back of our minds at least. Material support has been defined very, very broadly by some agencies of our Government in the past.

One experience in work that I have done, you know, we had, several years ago, poor Colombians who had been victims of the FARC, which had been a designated terrorist group, applying for refugee status to come to the United States, but DHS labeled them as material supporters of terrorism, because they had been forced at gunpoint to provide food to the FARC, and that was deemed as material support.

There have been just cases that defy logic and common sense, and yet, the law being what it is, we have had to struggle with how this is actually applied in practice, which brings me back to kind-of where I left off, the discussion of the specially designated global terrorist authority, which allows us to apply the financial sanctions, really important in cutting off financial flows, and some forms of cooperation by American nationals and the activities of these groups.

Just want to get more clarity about how that works. The standard for designating someone a specially designated global terrorist, basically they have to provide they have committed a terrorist act, or there is a finding that they are—they pose a significant risk of committing a terrorist act.

Is that basically correct, Mr. Godfrey, maybe to you?

Mr. GODFREY. Thank you, Congressman.

Right. So the SDGT designation allows the Department to designate foreign groups or individuals that have committed, or have attempted to commit or pose a significant risk of committing, or have participated in training to commit acts of terrorism that threaten the security of U.S. nationals, or National security, and that includes foreign policy or the economy of the United States.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. OK. So making that a little more specific, I mean, imagine a group based in Europe, or overseas, that advocates the supremacy of the White race, that advocates the replacement of democratically-elected governments with, you know, basically, you know, fascism or Nazism, that advocates violence in support of that goal, perhaps, even offers small arms training, or explosives training, to people who want it, who share their ideology. Would that be enough to be able to, you know, generically—I am not talking about a specific group—to trigger that kind of designation?

What I am getting at here is whether that authority is sufficiently robust. It is more limited in terms of the unintended consequences, which is why it is attractive. But is the definition sufficient? You know, is the bar set at the right point?

Mr. GODFREY. Congressman, the example, the hypothetical you gave, which we are always reluctant to engage in, but I think it is an aptly formed one, I think in that instance, the kind of group you identified with the activities that you identified—and that is the critical part of this—would likely meet the standard for designation.

So, again, the critical nexus for designations is good information that demonstrates both capacity and intent on the part of a group to engage in terrorist acts. If we meet that threshold, we are on solid ground.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. OK. Well, let's explore that further because, again, I am not—some would argue that the examples that I rattled off do not necessarily constitute intent to commit terrorist acts.

Slightly different example, there has been reporting recently that there have been very large transfers of bitcoin to particular Americans, Nick Fuentes, for example, who is sort-of a well-known extreme right activist involved in the January 6 riots, receiving hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of bitcoin from foreign supporters.

It is not illegal for a foreigner to provide cash support to political causes in the United States, not political electoral, but social causes.

But would that kind of transfer raise any kind of legal questions that you guys could pursue under current law related to tax reporting, or something outside of the counterterrorism realm that would allow us to get at that kind of support for these groups in the United States?

Ms. SLOTKIN. Briefly, please.

Mr. GODFREY. Congressman, I think on that sort of an issue, those authorities would reside with the Treasury as opposed to the State Department.

If I could just circle back, one point of clarification on your hypothetical, the element that you mentioned that specifically allows us



to bridge to an SGTD potential designation was the training going back to the expansion of authorities in late 2019.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Got it. All righty. Thanks.

I will yield back. I am out of time.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Thank you.

With that, I thank the witnesses for their valuable testimony, and for the Members for their questions.

I ask unanimous consent that 2 letters be inserted into the record. One is the letter I wrote to Secretary Blinken on April 5 requesting the Department of State, with input from interagency partners, consider designating these groups either as FTOs or SDGTs. The second is the State Department's response dated April 23.

[The information follows:]

LETTER FROM CHAIRWOMAN SLOTKIN TO SECRETARY ANTONY J. BLINKEN

April 5, 2021.

The Honorable ANTONY J. BLINKEN,  
Secretary, U.S. Department of State, 2201 C St NW, Washington, DC 20520.

DEAR SECRETARY BLINKEN: In April of 2020, the State Department designated the first-ever white supremacist extremist (WSE) group, the Russian Imperial Movement (RIM), and three of its leaders as Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGT). This was a welcome step to curb the global threat from white supremacist extremists, but it's time for more to be done. As such, I write to ask that you designate additional overseas violent WSE groups in the attached list that meet the necessary criteria as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs). If these groups do not meet the more stringent FTO criteria, I ask that you designate these groups as SDGTs, as your predecessor did with RIM. Such designations will help apply more stress to curtail these violent organizations' and their leaders' ability to operate their groups. It would also give the U.S. Government more tools to engage and flag the Americans who contact, support, train, and join these WSE groups, under applicable laws.

As a former CIA officer who has looked at foreign terrorist organizations in the Middle East most of my career, I was struck by the threat these white supremacist groups pose, the amount of contact they have with extremists in the U.S., the minimal intelligence and diplomatic reporting we have on these groups, and the relative lack of review taken by the U.S. Government. In the past several years there have been numerous incidents of WSE-inspired violence across the globe, in places like Germany,<sup>1</sup> New Zealand,<sup>2</sup> Ukraine,<sup>3</sup> and France,<sup>4</sup> in furtherance of white supremacist political ideology. The Department of Homeland Security's most recent Threat Assessment recognizes this growing problem and its impact on the homeland, noting that "WSEs have engaged in outreach and networking opportunities abroad with like-minded individuals to expand their violent extremist networks. Such outreach might lead to a greater risk of mobilization to violence, including traveling to conflict zones."<sup>5</sup>

As you know, the Department of Justice regularly prosecutes American citizens for providing material support to groups like the Islamic State or al-Qaeda, who are designated as FTOs. However, if that same American citizen collaborates with a violent WSE group based overseas and supports their designs for terror, receives train-

<sup>1</sup> German Halle Gunman Admits Far-Right Synagogue Attack, BBC, Oct. 11, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-50011898>.

<sup>2</sup> Christchurch Mosque Shootings: Gunman Livestreamed 17 Minutes of Shooting Terror, NEW ZEALAND HERALD, Mar. 15, 2019, <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/christchurch-mosque-shootings-gunman-livestreamed-17-minutes-of-shooting-terror/BLRK6K4XBT0IS7EQCZW24G-FAPM/>.

<sup>3</sup> Tim Lister, *The Nexus Between Far-Right Extremists in the United States and Ukraine*, COMBATING TERRORISM CENTER AT WEST POINT, April 2020, <https://ctc.usma.edu/the-nexus-between-far-right-extremists-in-the-united-states-and-ukraine/>.

<sup>4</sup> Angelique Chrisafis, *Police Arrest 84-Year-Old Man Over Gun and Arson Attack at French Mosque*, THE GUARDIAN, Oct. 28, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/oct/28/two-injured-in-arson-and-gun-attack-at-french-mosque>.

<sup>5</sup> Homeland Threat Assessment, DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY, Oct. 2020, [https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/2020\\_10\\_06\\_homeland-threat-assessment.pdf](https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/2020_10_06_homeland-threat-assessment.pdf).

ing, money or resources, or travels to fight alongside them, the Federal Government does not currently have access to the same legal tools, since these WSE groups are not designated terrorist organizations or individuals.

By my read, there seem to be ample examples of foreign white supremacist groups that meet the criteria for the FTO list. For example, the 2018 U.S. Counterterrorism Strategy names the Nordic Resistance Movement and the National Action Group as Terrorist Adversaries in the same section as ISIS, al-Qaeda, Boko Haram, and Hizballah.<sup>6</sup> The Azov Battalion, a well-known militia organization in Ukraine, uses the internet to recruit new members and then radicalizes them to use violence to pursue its white identity political agenda.<sup>7</sup> A full list of the foreign groups I would ask you to review is attached.

In addition, I would ask your help with a related matter: Canada has taken the step of designating The Proud Boys and The Base as terrorist groups whose members may now see their financial assets seized.<sup>8</sup> While there is less information on the foreign affiliates of these two groups, as a representative of a border State, I ask for your help in clarifying what their designation means for U.S. diplomatic reporting, intelligence sharing, and law enforcement cooperation between the U.S. and Canada, given the complicated legal issues at play—particularly before the border re-opens after COVID.

Thank you for your attention to these matters. I know you are concerned about foreign organizations that use violence to further their political goals, particularly when they pose a threat to U.S. citizens, interests, and allies abroad. I ask that you take a thorough look at these WSE groups as Foreign Terrorist Organizations as soon as possible. They continue to show in very public ways who they are and the lethal steps they will take to achieve their goals in countries across the globe.

Thanks for your attention. I would appreciate even an interim response by May 3, 2021.

Sincerely,

ELISSA SLOTKIN,  
Chairwoman,  
Subcommittee on Intelligence and Counterterrorism,  
Committee on Homeland Security.

#### SUGGESTED LIST OF WSE GROUPS TO CONSIDER FOR DESIGNATION

Atomwaffen Division Deutschland  
Azov Battalion (foreign affiliates and members)  
Blood & Honour  
Combat 18  
Feuerkrieg Division  
Generation Identity  
Hammerskins (foreign affiliates and members)  
National Action Group, aka System Resistance Network  
Nordic Resistance Movement  
Northern Order  
Order of Nine Angles  
Rise Above Movement (foreign affiliates and members)  
Sonnenkrieg Division

#### LETTER FROM NAZ DURAKOGLU TO CHAIRWOMAN SLOTKIN

April 23, 2021.

The Honorable ELISSA SLOTKIN,  
Chairwoman, Subcommittee on Intelligence and Counterterrorism, Committee on  
Homeland Security, House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515.

DEAR MADAM CHAIRWOMAN: Thank you for your letter of April 5 about the potential designations of violent white supremacist groups under the Secretary of State's counterterrorism authorities.

<sup>6</sup>National Strategy for Counterterrorism of the United States of America, THE WHITE HOUSE, Oct 2018, [https://www.dni.gov/files/NCTC/documents/news\\_documents/NSCT.pdf](https://www.dni.gov/files/NCTC/documents/news_documents/NSCT.pdf).

<sup>7</sup>Simon Shuster and Billy Perrigo, *Like, Share, Recruit: How a White-Supremacist Militia Uses Facebook to Radicalize and Train New Members*, TIME MAGAZINE, Jan. 7, 2021, <https://time.com/5926750/azov-far-right-movement-facebook/>.

<sup>8</sup>Ian Austen, *Canada Formally Declares Proud Boys a Terrorist Group*, NEW YORK TIMES, Feb. 3, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/03/world/canada/canada-proud-boys-terror-group.html>.

The Biden-Harris Administration shares your deep concern about the threat posed by racially or ethnically motivated violent extremism (REMVE), including violent white supremacist groups. The National Security Council is currently leading an expedited policy review of domestic terrorism, including the nexus to REMVE actors overseas, to determine how the government can better share information about this threat, support efforts to prevent radicalization to violence, and more effectively disrupt REMVE networks at home and abroad.

You mentioned in your letter a number of REMVE groups overseas that could be considered for designation as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) or Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGTs). Thank you for sharing this information, and please rest assured that the Department is deeply committed to the appropriate use of its counterterrorism-related designations authorities to limit the ability of foreign groups or individuals linked to acts of terrorism to obtain resources and support, regardless of their ideologies or motivations. Designation of the Russian Imperial Movement (RIM) and members of its leadership as Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGTs) in April 2020—the first time in history the Department has designated a white supremacist terrorist group—reflect that commitment. As you know, we actively and continuously assess REMVE groups abroad that could be designated as FTOs and/or SDGTs and stand ready to use our authorities to do so. An important limitation in those efforts is the availability of sufficient credible information that meets standards for designation.

It is clear that our foreign partners share our concern about the increased threat posed by REMVE actors and welcome coordination with the United States to address it. With respect to your question about Canada's recent designations of The Proud Boys and The Base and U.S.-Canadian diplomatic reporting, intelligence sharing and law enforcement cooperation, Canada has been and remains one of our closest counterterrorism partners, one with whom we regularly share information about potential threats through diplomatic, law enforcement, and intelligence channels.

The State Department is bringing all our counterterrorism tools to the fight against REMVE actors—information sharing, preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE), restricting terrorist travel, engaging with technology companies to urge enforcement of terms of service for use of online platforms, and building partner capacity to protect soft targets like synagogues, mosques, and churches. We will also continue to review all sources of information to assess whether foreign REMVE groups and/or individuals meet the legal criteria for designation under State's authorities.

On February 24, 2021, the Secretary designated the Coordinator for Counterterrorism as the lead for the Department's efforts to counter REMVE, including White Identity Terrorism (WIT), as mandated in the Fiscal Year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). In response to other NDAA provisions, the Department has now funded a WIT social networking study by a Federally Funded Research and Development Center and is working to expeditiously address other NDAA WIT requirements.

We hope this information is helpful to you. Please let us know if we may be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

NAZ DURAKOGLU,

*Acting Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Legislative Affairs.*

Ms. SLOTKIN. The Members of the subcommittee may have additional questions for the witnesses, and we ask that you respond just as expeditiously in writing to those questions.

Without objection, the committee record shall be kept open for 10 days. Hearing no further business, the subcommittee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:15 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

